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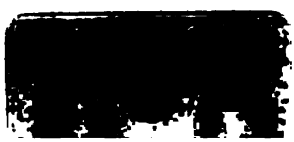

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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

V. 8

THE BARBER OF PARIS

Translated into English by

EDITH MARY NORRIS

VOLUME II

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

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CONTENTS
VOLUME II

CHAPTER I — PAGE

Who Could Have Expected It? 1

CHAPTER II

Happy Moments 23

CHAPTER III

A Day with Chaudoreille 38

CHAPTER IV

The Little Supper 54

CHAPTER V

Having Money and Power One May Dare Everything 74

CHAPTER VI

The Rendezvous. Strokes of Fortune. The Hotel de Bourgogne. The Sedan Chair 102

CHAPTER VII

Poor Urbain 126

CHAPTER IX

The Château de Sarcus 135

CONTENTS

CHAPTER IX

The Meeting. Projects of Revenge 164

CHAPTER X

The Little Closet Again 183

CHAPTER XI

The Storm Brews 197

CHAPTER XII

The Return to the Château 212

CHAPTER XIII

The Marquis Visits Blanche at Night 226

CHAPTER XIV

Urbain's Visit to the Marquis. Chaudoreille's Last Adventure 242

CHAPTER XV

Julia's Story. What was Contained in the Portfolio 258

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
VOLUME II

THE CHÂTEAU DE SARCUS. (See page 92.) Frontispiece
Original etching by Charles H. White.

PAGE

"SAVE YOURSELF; YOU HAVE KILLED THE SON OF THE KING OF COCHIN-CHINA" . . . 44
Photogravure from original drawing by William Glackens.

DE CHAVAGNAC 59
Photogravure from original drawing by G. A. Williams.

HE FELL BACK IN THE BOTTOM OF THE CHAIR 125
Photogravure from original drawing by Albert de Ford Pitney.

CHAPTER I

Who Could Have Expected It

The slap in the face which had been so vigorously applied to the impertinent Chevalier Chaudoreille by Urbain in his character of a good-looking young woman, though richly deserved, had been so unexpected, had so thoroughly stunned the poor little specimen of humanity that he had remained for some moments supported by the stone post against which he had been flung by the force of the blow, entirely unconscious as to his whereabouts.

But as his wits returned to their normal capacity, and he fully realized the indignity to which he had been subjected in being overcome by a blow from a woman, at a moment, too, when he thought his success certain, the little fellow drew himself up with fierce determination, and, as he rubbed his still tingling and burning cheek, he exclaimed,—

"Oh, hang it all! Is it likely I will submit to such treatment. I shall know how to revenge myself, young Amazon, little as you may think so at the present moment. Never shall it be said that Venus withdrew from the transports of

Mars; that slap in the face shall prove costly to her virtue."

Immediately he followed on the steps of his Venus, who was dashing along, jumping over the streams which came in her way. Chaudoreille's sharp little eyes recognized the person whom he was pursuing just at the moment when Urbain reached the barber's house and entered the alley-way, shutting the door immediately after him.

Chaudoreille knew Touquet's house so well that his distance from the pretended country woman could not prevent him from recognizing her place of retreat, and it was with extreme surprise that our poursuivant d'amour perceived that his beauty had taken refuge in the house of his friend, Touquet. He approached the alley, presuming that she might inadvertently have left the door open, but it was closed; besides, the person he had followed had not hesitated for an instant in the choice of a hiding-place, all of which seemed to indicate that the barber's house had been her destination. This incident gave rise to many conjectures on Chaudoreille's part, awakening his lively curiosity; he decided not to leave the house until the departure of the one whom he had seen enter, and walked up and down from the Rue des Mauvaises-Paroles to the Rue Saint-Honoré.

Time passed and Chaudoreille vainly watched, with his eyes directed to the house, noticing that there was still a light in Blanche's room. Soon the

rain began to fall and the wind blew violently; but the chevalier, though inadequately protected by a penthouse, under which he had taken refuge, did not dream of leaving the place, and wrapped himself as well as he could in his little cloak, saying, —

"She must come out sooner or later. What the deuce! can she be Touquet's mistress? Oh, hang it! I must seek the clue to this enigma. The light is still burning in my beautiful scholar's room. Hem! I have certain suspicions. That devil of a slap in the face was given to me with so much force that it makes me believe that my Venus may perhaps have a beard. Patience, she will either come out or I shall go in!"

Poor lovers! While you were enjoying so much the pleasure of being together, while you were beginning to understand each other and to exchange loving glances, in which Blanche no longer showed any timidity, you had no suspicion that at a short distance from you a cursed man had his eyes directed to your window and proposed to disturb your happiness; and all because the success of his shuffling, the white wine, and Urbain's fictitious charms had mounted to Chaudoreille's head.

Eleven o'clock had long since struck. We know what had taken place upstairs; now let us see what had taken place below.

Chaudoreille, unable longer to contain himself.

decided to knock at the barber's door. The lovers had not heard him, because at that moment Urbain was kissing Blanche's soft little hand, and in so agreeable an occupation one is not liable to notice what takes place in the street. Marguerite was snoring in a manner which did not indicate fear; in truth, she had gone to sleep with the precious talisman at her side.

But the barber was not asleep; whether it was because of the storm or the wind, or from some other cause, Master Touquet, who rarely slept peacefully in his bed at night, had not yet gone up to his room, and was pacing slowly in his back shop, ever gloomy and preoccupied, and murmuring at intervals, —

"Cursed night! Why do these shadows incessantly disturb my rest? As soon as daylight disappears my torments recommence. I have gold —yes, I have gold, but I no longer enjoy my natural rest. I shall sell this house; I shall go far from here, very far. I shall return to my country, my father, if he is still living. He will be very much astonished at the change in my fortune. He cursed me when I left the country — but I will ask him to forgive me; yes, he will surely forgive my early faults when he sees that I am rich and respected. I shall not tell him all; no, I shall not tell him how I acquired this fortune."

A bitter smile flickered on the barber's pale

lips and he returned to his reflections, from which he was drawn by the knocking at the door.

Touquet started with fright, but immediately appearing ashamed of himself, took his lamp and went quickly towards the door. He did not expect anyone so late, but supposed that the Marquis de Villebelle, finding himself in that neighborhood, was perhaps seeking him in regard to some new love intrigue.

As he drew near the door he recognized Chaudoreille's voice, calling, —

"Open the door, Touquet. Open the door. Don't be afraid, it's me, but it is absolutely necessary that I should speak to you."

The barber opened the door; and Chaudoreille, whose soaked garments were glued to his lean figure, which appeared even more attenuated than usual, being all shrivelled up under his cloak, came into the alley huddled together, as if he were afraid that his head would hit the little lattice-work over the door.

"What the devil has brought you here at this hour?" said the barber, shutting his door, while the Gascon looked towards the end of the alley as though he were trying to see someone. Finally, he put his finger on his mouth and said in a low voice, —

"Are you alone just now?"

"Yes, certainly."

"You have no visitors?"

"Why, no, nobody, I tell you."

"Then it is urgent that I should speak with you."

The barber returned into the lower room, and Chaudoreille followed him, walking on his tip-toes and turning to the right and left, as though he were looking for someone.

"Come, what have you got to say?" said Touquet. "What means this visit, so near midnight? Did you think that I should be inclined to sleep you? Go. There are still gambling dens open in Paris where you can find a bed, but my house shall not serve as a shelter for nighthawks."

Chaudoreille, without appearing in the least disconcerted, listened to Touquet, shaking his hat meanwhile, and wringing his mantle; he smiled with a mischievous air as he listened to the barber's last words, and answered, —

"Your house! By jingo, you make a good deal of fuss about your house. We shall see presently whether you receive any suspicious persons."

"What do you mean by that?" cried Touquet, angrily.

"Hush! Don't make so much noise, I beg of you. Don't wake the cat up, she is asleep."

"Chaudoreille, I'm losing patience. Say what you want, or I'll be the death of you."

"Well, what the deuce! I came to do you a service, and it seems to me that that shouldn't make you angry. Listen now, but I beg of you

don't lose your temper, for that will make me break the thread of my discourse."

The barber restrained himself as well as he could, and Chaudoreille, after passing his cuff over the edge of his hat to give it a lustre, commenced his story in a low voice, —

"I was going this morning to Saint-Germain's fair and found myself without money, something which very often happens with me. I had eaten nothing since yesterday."

"You have eaten and drunk since, I'll answer for it."

"Yes, certainly, thanks to my genius. I was making some rather sad reflections on the instability of my luck at piquet, the treacherous chances of lansquenet and the lack of solidity in gambling —"

"I should like to make you reflect at this minute on the strength of a good stick."

"Hush, don't interrupt me. I perceived at the fair two young men, youths, you know; some of those faces which seem to say, 'Who will come and do me?' those faces without mischief which are a veritable good fortune for men of parts. The poor little fellows were playing at skittles."

"Come to the point. You are abusing my patience."

"This all leads up to the matter which regards you. I approached the innocents and showed them a new stroke which they did not know, I'll

answer for it. In short, we dined together, and I only took a pistole from them for the lesson, which was very reasonable, but if they had refused me I would have spitted them both like sparrows. Don't stamp your foot, I'm nearing the end. I was returning gayly, according to my habit, when I met a country woman in the street who seemed to me agreeable, although I saw little of her. Her carriage was free and unconstrained, she was big and strong; I was very much taken by her. I caught up to her and I said some charming things to her. Would you believe it? not a word in response; I repeated them, still no answer; I approached her and pinched her, and, my dear fellow, I received a most vigorous slap in the face."

"Well, hang it! she did well. Finish your chatter if you don't wish to receive a second."

"Stunned for an instant, I soon recovered my wits. I pursued the traitress. I saw her enter — where do you suppose? — your house."

"She came into my house? It is impossible; you are deceived."

"No, by all the devils! I know your dwelling well enough. She came in by the alleyway and shut the door immediately."

"What time was it then?"

"About seven o'clock. And I can answer for it that she didn't come out, for I haven't stirred from the front of the house."

"What, wretch, that woman has been so long in my house, and you only now come to tell me?"

"What do you expect? I didn't know what to do; between you and I, I thought the dame came to see you, but seeing that there was still a light in my scholar's room, I thought—"

"A light in Blanche's room?"

"Why, yes, by jingo! There's one there at this moment, from which I concluded—"

The barber hastily arose, lit a second lamp, took his sword and directed his steps towards the staircase at the back, saying to Chaudoreille,—

"Remain here and wait for me."

"Why, don't you want me to come with you?"

"Remain, here, I tell you, but if you have deceived me, tremble; your chastisement shall be proportioned to my anger."

"May the devil fly away with him," said Chaudoreille, ensconcing himself in a corner of the room. "I came to render him a service and he's going to flog me if he doesn't find the guilty person. That slap in the face may be followed by something still more cruel."

Touquet ran rapidly up the stairs to Blanche's room; he knocked, and ordered the young girl to open the door; we have seen the effect which these unexpected words produced on the young couple within the chamber.

Urbain remained motionless, his arms still em-

bracing the young girl, who was only half dressed. In a second all the suspicions which the situation would give rise to, in the mind of the person who had discovered them, flashed across him. Blanche, still innocent and pure, though her virtue had been endangered, Blanche would be adjudged guilty, and he was the cause of it. How could he prevent it? All these thoughts, rapid as lightning, transpired during the time which elapsed before the barber knocked for the second time, and loudly reiterated in a threatening voice the order which he had given. Urbain glanced at the chimney, seeing only that way of escaping from sight. He was about to run to it when Blanche stopped him. She had already recovered from her first fright, and said to him, with a calmness which astonished him, —

"Where are you going?"

"To hide myself."

"No, no, it is unnecessary for you to hide. Why not tell the whole truth?"

"O Blanche, if anyone finds me with you — at night?"

"Well, what of it? We have done nothing wrong. It is much better to confess everything at once than to lie about it," and the lovely child ran to the door, drew the bolt and opened to the barber. The latter darted into the room. His first looks were bent on Urbain, who was standing by the hearth. Touquet only looked at him for a

moment, for he had instantly recognized the young bachelor, and drawing his sword he rushed upon him, crying,—

"Scoundrel! You shall pay with your life for your temerity."

Urbain remained motionless, appearing to brave Touquet's fury, but seeing the homicidal weapon flash, Blanche cried out, and, quick as the barber, ran and placed herself before Urbain, whom she covered with her body; then, lifting her hands towards Touquet, she cried with an accent which came from her heart, —

"O monsieur, he has done nothing wrong."

The barber's weapon nearly grazed Blanche's bosom, but the young girl's accents were so touching, her sweet features wore an expression so noble, that the barber himself could not resist her. His anger seemed vanquished. He dropped his sword, and said in a less gloomy voice,—

"This man has outraged you, and you don't wish me to avenge you? You ask me to pardon him? Very well, I shall not strike."

"What?" said Blanche, surprised. "What, monsieur, is it because of me that you were about to hurt Urbain? Oh, you would have been very wrong. You say he has outraged me; but, no, monsieur, I swear to you he has not. He has told me that he loves me very much, that he will love me all his life, but there is nothing outrageous in that, for when you knocked at the door I believe

I was just going to tell him that I loved him also. You see that I am just as guilty as he is, and that it is necessary for you to punish both of us."

Blanche's words had an accent of truth which it was impossible to mistake. The barber glanced in astonishment at her and at Urbain, who saw that he then believed, despite appearances, that Blanche still retained her purity. However, the disorder which reigned in the apartment, the singular costume of the young girl and of Urbain, which was divided between that of the two sexes, all appeared to confuse Touquet's ideas.

"Listen to us," said Blanche to him, "you shall know the whole truth. Urbain, to be sure, is a little to blame, for he has come to see us every evening for nearly a fortnight, but he came as a young girl. At first I was angry with him also, but finally I have forgiven him. Urbain has such a sweet expression, and then, I already loved Ursule very much, and that made me love him also. He said that he wished to be my lover, my husband, that he could not live without me, and that it would depend upon you to make us happy forever. Ah, you will be good, will you not, my dear friend? You have already done much for me. Give me Urbain for my husband, and I promise you that I will never ask anything of you again."

The barber, while listening to Blanche, muttered to himself, —

"For nearly a fortnight he has been coming here every evening, it is by a great chance that I discovered him today, and yet I believed that I could easily guard a young girl and brave the enterprises of lovers."

"Monsieur," said Urbain, who up to that moment had kept silent, "I confess all the wrong I have done, and love alone must be my excuse; but I adored Blanche, whom I had seen through the panes of that window, and you would not permit any man to approach her. I tried once to begin an acquaintance with you, but the manner in which you received me left me no hope. I then consulted nothing but my love. Thanks to this disguise I deceived old Marguerite, who consented to introduce me here. I saw Blanche, and could I renounce the hope of possessing her? She was deceived as well as her nurse. Under the name of Ursule I had the good fortune to gain her confidence and, by some interesting stories, to amuse old Marguerite. I rejoiced in my happiness without daring to make myself known. Today, on account of the storm, the rain, which fell so violently, the advanced hour, she invited me to remain."

"Yes," said Blanche, with an angelic smile, "He was going to sleep with me. I myself begged him to do so."

The barber knit his brows and glanced angrily at the young man. Urbain instantly threw himself at his feet, crying,—

"I have respected her virtue, her innocence. O monsieur, can I not touch you with my love. Yes, I adore Blanche, give me her hand or deprive me of a life which without her would be insupportable."

"Hear us, my friend," said Blanche. "He will absolutely die if I am not his wife, and if he should die I feel that I should die of grief, too."

The barber appeared to listen to Urbain without being in the least moved by his prayers, when the young bachelor added,—

"I know, monsieur, all that you have done for Blanche. Her father was assassinated, she remained an orphan without any support. She owes everything to you."

"What?" said Touquet, who had paid more attention to Urbain's last words, "you know—"

"Yes, monsieur, I learned all that concerns her whom I adore. She did not know her parents and possessed no fortune, but it is she alone whom I ask of you. You have done well for her. Give me Blanche; she is sufficient for my happiness. I also am an orphan; my family was honest and respectable, but I have no relations left. My name is Urbain Dorgeville; I have an income of twelve hundred livres; that is very little, but I possess besides a little house in the country, on the borders of the Loire, there I shall go to live with Blanche. Far from the tumult of the city, which we shall not regret, nor its pleasures; and

far from society, which we do not wish to know, we shall there pass our days in peace and love and happiness."

The barber appeared to reflect deeply. He rose, and strolled about the room with bowed head. Hope and fear were depicted in the looks of the two lovers, who waited with impatience his answer. Finally, he paused, and said to Urbain,—

"You are an orphan? Entirely master of your own actions?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"There is nobody to object to your marrying an orphan without means, and whose family is unknown?"

"Nobody, I repeat to you, can oppose my wishes."

"You will never seek, yourself, to obtain any information in regard to Blanche's family, which, besides, would prove entirely fruitless."

"Why, what does it matter to me who were her parents. She is a treasure in herself."

"And you will go to live with her far from Paris—far from everyone?"

"Yes, for I shall make it my care to be all-sufficient to her happiness."

"O heavens, Urbain," said Blanche, "You know very well that I never left this room, where I saw no one but Marguerite. If I were to live with you in the country do you suppose that I should wish for anything else?"

"Dear Blanche, unite with me then in obtaining the consent of your protector."

The two young people bent on the barber entreating looks. The latter did not notice them and appeared entirely wrapped in his reflections; at last, all of a sudden, he stopped before Urbain, and said, in a curt tone,—

"Blanche is yours."

"Can it be?" cried the young bachelor, in a delirium of happiness. "Blanche, do you hear? He consents to our union."

"Oh, my dear friend, how much I thank you."

And the two lovers fell on their knees before Touquet, their eyes bathed with tears of pleasure and gratitude.

"What are you doing?" said the barber, who seemed ashamed to see the young couple at his feet. "Get up, I beg of you."

"You have made us happy," said Urbain, "and you will not even receive our thanks."

"No, no, I wish for nothing but silence and discretion."

"Aren't you glad now that you didn't injure Urbain? He meant no harm in disguising himself as a girl. It was he who sang so beautifully under my window. Oh, how happy I am! He can sing with me all the time now. He will teach me that pretty romance and some others, too. Will you not, Urbain, teach me many things? Oh, how happy we shall be."

The barber had some trouble in calming Urbain's transports and Blanche's naïve joy. Finally he succeeded in making them listen.

"Until the time of your union," said he, "I repeat to you, I shall exact the greatest discretion. Urbain you must promise me not to speak of your marriage, and not to bring any of your acquaintances here."

"I swear to you, monsieur, that I will do as you wish; besides, I don't know anybody. I have no intimate friends."

"That is better still, you will have less to regret in leaving the city. Make all your preparations for departure, and procure all the necessary documents for your marriage. As to Blanche, I will give you the letter found on her father; that is all which concerns that matter. When you have made all the necessary arrangements, you can marry Blanche — but in the evening without any stir, with nothing that can draw people to the church to see the ceremony; I dislike idlers and curious people. Afterwards you will immediately start for the country; and you will not return to this city, where your modest means would not permit you to live happily."

"Yes, I agree to all, monsieur."

"Are you coming with us, my friend?"

"No, that is not necessary. Later on, perhaps."

"And Marguerite, can we take her with us?"

"Yes."

"How nice that will be!"

"Up to the day of your departure Urbain can come here, but in the evening only, and not in disguise."

"He will come as a boy. I am very curious to see him like that."

"You understand; it is very late. It is necessary for you to retire. Urbain, I repeat to you, maintain the greatest silence about all this. Hasten your preparations, and Blanche will soon be yours."

Urbain renewed his promises and his thanks to the barber, and took Blanche's hand and covered it with kisses. The young people could hardly believe in their happiness, and the future that was opening before them still seemed a dream of their imagination, but Touquet hurried them.

"I shall see you tomorrow," said Urbain.

"Tomorrow," repeated Blanche, "and not in woman's clothes. Do you hear? I wish to grow accustomed to seeing you as a man."

"Yes, dear Blanche, yes. No more pretence now."

The barber cut their adieux short and led away the young man, and Blanche closed her door, sighing and murmuring still, —

"Tomorrow."

Touquet guided Urbain, holding the lamp in his hand, and walking rapidly towards the staircase; but hardly had he taken ten steps in the

passage when his foot caught in something. He lowered his lamp and perceived a little shapeless heap which moved and appeared to want to glide along the wall. The barber ran at this object and, quickly lifting the mantle which covered it, perceived Chaudoreille, with his body on all fours in such a way as not to take more room than a big cat.

"What are you doing there, clown?" cried Touquet, putting his lamp against Chaudoreille's face.

"Me? Nothing. I am picking up a pin."

"Go down to the room. I have told you before that I don't like curious people," and to prove this to him beyond a possibility of doubt the barber kicked the chevalier vigorously, and the latter, not having had time to straighten himself, received the kick in three parts of his body. Touquet did not stop to do more, but led the bachelor to the street door, and opening it for him said, —

"Go, and remember all that you have promised."

Urbain was about to renew his protestations of gratitude, but the barber put an end to them by telling him to go immediately to his dwelling, and closing the door upon him.

Touquet returned into the lower room where he found Chaudoreille, who had resumed his natural size and was promenading with the air of a conqueror, evidently awaiting the thanks of the barber.

"Well, now, by jingo!" cried he impatiently, seeing that the latter said nothing to him. "You have found the magpie in the nest. I haven't dim sight. And that slap in the face, zounds! I recognized a masculine hand. I am never deceived. Well, we have, according to what I see, shown the gallant to the door. As to the little one, hang it! With her sanctimonious air, who would have expected it?"

"Be silent!" cried the barber, advancing towards Chaudoreille with a threatening gesture. "Do not outrage Blanche. That the young girl is still pure is as true as that you are a liar and a coward."

"A coward! By jingo, if Rolande could only speak!"

"Yes, I confess that I found someone there, but that someone was not alone with Blanche."

"That is singular. I didn't hear old Marguerite's voice."

"You were listening, then, wretch."

"No, it was by chance that some sounds reached my ears; some one called out. I thought that somebody had need of help and, following my natural ardor, I went towards the neighborhood from whence the noise came."

"Well, what did you hear? Speak, I tell you!"

"Oh, nothing, some words. It seemed to me that you were promising to unite the two lovers. At least I believe that's what I caught. However,

if I had not thought that you were keeping the little one for yourself I would have demanded her hand of you long ago. It seems to me that I deserve the preference over that little masker, who if it had not been for his petticoat would have paid dearly for the slap on the face he gave me."

"You become Blanche's husband!" said the barber, glancing scornfully at the little man. "Listen, Chaudoreille, it suits me to give Blanche to this young man; he will make her happy."

"As to that you are the master, but—"

"But, if you say a word about what you have seen and heard tonight I shall draw down upon you the most terrible vengeance. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I understand you. By jingo, marry the little one with whom you please. I don't care a fig for the pair of them. However, if there is to be a wedding, I hope—"

"No, there will be neither a wedding nor a repast—"

"That will be gay!"

"But, if you are discreet, I promise you two pieces of gold when everything is finished and Blanche has left this house."

"Agreed. That will suit me, it is as if I held them now; you might as well pay me in advance."

"I prefer, however, not to pay you until afterwards. But the night is drawing to a close; go home, Chaudoreille, and remember your promise."

"Yes, yes, that's settled. Is there any news of the seductive marquis and the young Italian?"

"I believe that fire is already extinguished. But that doesn't astonish me; a fortnight, three weeks, is the measure of the constancy of our great noblemen."

"And after that's ended it's probable that there will be one intrigue after another to conduct. If so remember me, my dear Touquet."

"Very good, go to your bed!"

"In fact, it's about time. I'll go back to the Rue Brise-Miche; fortunately my portress has a liking for me, or else I should run a great risk of sleeping in the street. However, if you wish, I could wait for day here, on a chair."

"No, no, it's necessary for you to go; I need some rest, also, and it seems to me that I shall get little of it this night."

Chaudoreille enveloped himself as well as he could in his mantle and went towards the door, making a grimace. The barber closed it on him and went to his room, saying, —

"I have done well; she will go away, no one will hear tell of her again, and everything regarding her will soon be forgotten."

CHAPTER II

Happy Moments

Marguerite alone had slept during the night which had wrought so great a change in the barber's household; greatly cheered and calmed by the possession of Ursule's talisman she slept more soundly than she had ever done in her new room. As for Blanche one may well suppose that she did not close her eyes for a moment. The amiable child, still bewildered by all the events which had taken place, had hardly had time to pass from the fear of love to the fear of happiness; she was too innocent, too childlike to have dreamed of love as yet, her poor heart hardly yet realized its own state, though one sentiment stronger than all others dominated its thoughts. She tossed continually on her couch, repeating to herself,—

"He's a boy, and it was he who sang so beautifully. Mercy, who could have expected it? He was so pleasing as a girl; however, I believe he will be still better as a boy. Oh, I wish it was evening now. He said that he loved me—how strange that is—do I also love him? I believe I do. However, I must ask Marguerite what love is, she ought to know that. Poor Marguerite,

how surprised she'll be when she learns that he was not a girl. Oh, I wish it was day now."

The day so much desired appeared at length. Blanche had been up for a long time; impatient at not hearing the old nurse come down, she could not resist going up to Marguerite's room. She knocked at the door, exclaiming, —

"Wake up, dear nurse! it's very late. I have a thousand things to tell you. Get up, I beg of you — you have slept long enough."

Marguerite, who never had to be awakened, because she always rose sufficiently early, rubbed her eyes, believing that the house was on fire, sought to recall her ideas, to recover the talisman which had been entrusted to her and which had been lost among the bedclothes, while invoking her patron saint, and muttering, —

"Where has it gone to? I've looked for it — has the devil taken it away from me during the night? Wait now — ah, I shan't find it again. I thought I felt something. It must have been the devil who took it maliciously!"

Finally Marguerite found the little scrap of Urbain's breeches, and recalling all that had taken place on the evening before, she hastened to open the door to Blanche, and said, —

"Has Ursule gone? It's necessary to hasten her away, my child."

"Oh, yes, she's gone; that is to say, he's gone. But don't be afraid, my good friend is willing that

he should come — he wishes him to marry me; he's no longer angry. He's coming here this evening as a boy; you will see how nice he is; and when we are married, we shall go into the country and you shall come with us. Oh, how happy I shall be! Come, Marguerite, laugh too; you see it's no longer necessary to have any fear."

Marguerite had no desire to laugh, she would rather have wept, for she understood nothing that Blanche was saying; she opened her eyes as widely as possible and exclaimed, —

"O good God, my dear child, is your head turned this morning? Can that Ursule be a sorcerer? Don't jump like that, I beg of you."

Blanche recommenced her narrative and at last made Marguerite understand that Ursule was a boy. The old woman cried, affrightedly, —

"My God! a boy, and he slept with you?"

"Oh, no, dear nurse, because Monsieur Touquet came in just at the moment when — mercy! I don't know what we were doing at that moment — oh, yes, I believe he was kissing me."

"Holy Virgin! it was a goblin disguised as a girl."

"No, dear nurse, he's called Urbain, he's an orphan like me; but his family was very respectable, and he's going to marry me."

"To marry you?"

"Yes, certainly. You won't oppose it when my protector has given his consent, will you?"

"What, M. Touquet has consented to it?"

"Yes, yes, I tell you. It's finished. Everything is arranged."

The good old woman hardly believed that her ears did not deceive her, but the arrival of her master put an end to her doubts.

The barber looked very stern as he approached Marguerite, and the old woman trembled, for she felt that she was in fault.

"Marguerite," he said, "I could punish you for having betrayed my confidence, for having, despite my orders, introduced someone into the house. You will tell me, like Blanche, that you have been deceived — and I would wish to think so, besides, as I have forgiven it, it is needless to dwell on what is past. The young man will be Blanche's husband; he will make her happy. You will go with them when they leave this house. I have but one command to lay upon you, and that is to keep this incident from all your gossips in this neighborhood. If you commit the least indiscretion, I'll send you away and you will prevent this marriage from taking place."

"Oh, dear nurse, don't say anything about it," cried Blanche.

"No, mademoiselle; no, monsieur," responded Marguerite, still trembling, "I swear to you that—"

"That's enough," said the barber. "You love Blanche, and her happiness depends upon your

discretion. Urbain will come in the evenings only, until the day he takes away his bride."

The barber departed after thus speaking, leaving Marguerite still dumbfounded by all that she had heard.

"How is this?" said she, following Blanche to her room; "M. Touquet consented to this at once?"

"Yes, dear nurse."

"I'm not to be sent away."

"That surprises me, also; I was so afraid he would refuse Urbain."

"Urbain — Urbain — but you don't know him, my child!"

"Why, yes, I do, dear nurse, since he is Ursule."

"I understand that very well; but Ursule has deceived us."

"It was that he might see me that Urbain disguised himself; it was love that made him do it, dear nurse."

"Love, indeed! but you cannot yet love him, my child."

"Oh, dear nurse, I believe I shall love him very quickly. Urbain was teaching me how to love yesterday, when my protector knocked at the door."

"Jesu, Maria! What, my child, in place of calling for help when you saw it was a man?"

"I desired to do so at first, but if you only

knew! Urbain was not at all alarming, on the contrary; and then he threw himself at my feet and begged my pardon with such a sweet air, with eyes so — O Marguerite, what should I have forgiven him for."

"Good heavens! And your talisman, my girl, did you not have recourse to that?"

"Oh, forgive me, dear nurse, I even showed it several times to Urbain."

"And it didn't cause him to fly?"

"On the contrary, dear nurse, he drew still nearer."

"Come, decidedly everything is upside down. It must be that boy is a magician to work such changes in this house. I shall no longer have any faith in his little relic."

Blanche and the old woman awaited the evening with impatience; Marguerite curious to know the young man who had wrought such prodigies in her master's house, and the young girl ardently desiring to see again him who had caused her to sigh and to experience an entirely new feeling. But Blanche's desires were mingled with that timidity, that bashfulness, which accompany a first love. As the hour of Urbain's arrival approached she felt more restless and dreamy, and already this unknown sentiment inspired her with a secret desire to please; she rose, looked at herself in the mirror, and arranged a lock of hair, then she said to Marguerite, —

"Dear nurse, do I look all right? Do you think he will love me as much tonight as he did yesterday?"

"Dear child," cried the old servant, "if he is capable of changing would he be worthy of you? When one loves truly, my dear, 'tis for life."

"Oh, that is much better, dear nurse; I should like to love like that. You will see that there's nothing about Urbain to frighten one, and I am sure I shall love him also."

The young bachelor desired with no less impatience than Blanche the moment when he could return to the barber's house. Since the evening before Urbain had entirely lost his head, and his happiness had been so sudden, so unforeseen, that it had completely unbalanced him for the time. He had returned to his lodging in the night, dancing, singing and running in the street. In his intoxication he had lost his skirt and his kerchief; but he had no further need of his disguise, and without troubling himself to pick up those portions of his costume he had arrived at home partly undressed, but so happy that he would not have changed his lot for the fortune, the favor or the power of the cardinal; and in that he was right, the joys which love brings are not, as is the case with grandeur and power, mingled with anxieties and cares.

The next day Urbain would have liked to tell his happiness to all the world, but he remembered

that one of the first conditions of his marriage with Blanche was that he should keep the matter entirely secret; he contented himself, therefore, with looking at everybody who passed with an air of satisfaction and triumph which indicated a mind impervious to the strokes of fortune.

In the evening his neighbor came, as usual, to propose to help him in disguising himself; but Urbain thanked her; he had no further need of her services and the good-natured girl seemed vexed that the masqueradings were ended.

Urbain wished to please as a man still more than he had wished to do so as a country woman; he put on his collar and his hat with more care than he ordinarily took. He looked to see that his hair did not fall in disorder over his forehead, and sighed as he said, —

"If I should not succeed in pleasing her!" However, the remembrance of the evening before gave him courage, and he took his way to the barber's house. He trembled as he knocked at the door, although the fear of being sent away did not present itself to his mind. The sound of the knocker went to Blanche's heart, and she jumped from her chair, exclaiming, —

"It's he!" and was about to run to the street door when Marguerite stopped her, saying, —

"How now, my child, what are you going to do? It would not be decent for you to go and open the door for this young man."

"Do you think so, nurse. Very well; go then, Marguerite; go quickly."

Marguerite hurried as fast as she could, she was anxious to see the young man. She opened the door to Urbain and looked at him attentively; his gentle and diffident appearance made a favorable impression on the old woman.

"It's singular — he appears to be more embarrassed as a boy than as a girl. Come in, come in, my handsome young spark; come in. Now we shall see if you've any more stories to relate of the adventures of your aunts and cousins."

"Yes, my good Marguerite," said Urbain, "I shall continue to tell them to you if they give you pleasure."

"He wishes to please me," said Marguerite to herself. "Yes, Blanche was right, the young man is very charming."

The embarrassment of these two young lovers was a very singular thing, inasmuch as they had in their first interview spoken so freely of their love, and were already engaged and certain of being married. Blanche, who had at first wished to run to the door, now dared not raise her eyes, and, on hearing Urbain's step, remained motionless on her chair. The latter, on entering this room where he had been every evening for a fortnight, experienced an uneasiness, a new embarrassment, and paused near the door, holding his hat in his hand, and glancing timidly at Blanche.

"Well," said Marguerite, "here's one who dares go no farther at present. Come, master boy, when you were a girl you didn't thus remain standing motionless and mute at the door; and my poor Blanche, who is afraid to raise her eyes and is trembling like a leaf. My darling, it isn't necessary to blush like that when one has done nothing wrong. You see, I am obliged to encourage you."

However, Urbain gently approached Blanche, bent his knees to the floor and murmured, —

"If you no longer feel friendly to me, if this costume has made you lose confidence in me — I will resume that of Ursule."

The sweet girl timidly raised her head, and bending on Urbain a look of the tenderest love, she said, blushing deeper than before, —

"Oh, it isn't that. Excuse me, I don't know what is the matter with me."

She turned her head to hide her face in Marguerite's bosom, and said in a low tone to the latter, —

"Dear nurse, is it love that makes me feel so shy?"

"I remember scarcely anything about love now," answered the old woman, shaking her head; "however, yes, I believe in my young days it did evince itself somewhat in that fashion."

Blanche turned to Urbain and said to him, with a charming smile, —

"Don't be angry with me; if I am awkward and embarrassed it is because I love you."

Delighted at the candor of the young girl, Urbain took her hand and pressed it against his heart, then, seating himself near her, he renewed the vows with which love for her inspired him. Confidence was soon reëstablished between them; when two hearts beat in accord, constraint is soon banished. Blanche resumed her gayety, her ingenuousness, and allowed her lover to read all her feelings, and the latter perceived that he had a treasure of innocence and kindness.

Marguerite joined in the conversation of the young people; Urbain, by his amiability and the deference he showed for the old servant's advice, entirely won her friendship. The young bachelor praised the situation of his little property, which in the midst of a charming country offered delightful walks and all the pleasures of a rural existence. He promised the old woman to give her a room impervious to every enchantment, and to tell her in the long winter evenings some of the gruesome stories which gave her both fear and pleasure.

While chatting with Marguerite, the tender glances, pressings of the hand and sweet smiles of the two lovers established between them that sympathy of mind which gives the first, and perhaps the sweetest, taste of love.

The time passed rapidly, nine o'clock struck,

the hour which the barber had fixed for Urbain's departure, and they knew they must obey his commands if they wished him to keep his promises.

"Must I leave you already?" said Urbain.

"I'm sorry you must go," answered Blanche, sighing tenderly.

"You will see each other again tomorrow, my children," said Marguerite, "and the day will soon come when you will no longer have to part. Monsieur Dorgeville, have you begun the necessary preparations for your marriage?"

"Mon Dieu!" said Urbain, "I was so unsettled today that I could think of nothing but the happiness that I should enjoy this evening; and I have done nothing yet."

"If you are as heedless every day, your marriage will never take place," said Marguerite.

"Oh, tomorrow I will begin to put matters in train. I am anxious for the time when I shan't have to leave Blanche; but I haven't seen Monsieur Touquet this evening. Ought I not to go and say good evening to him?"

"No, it is needless; my master is unlike other men; he has no use for ceremony. He said to me, very positively, 'The young man will come at seven o'clock; you will conduct him to Blanche's room, where you will remain with them, and at nine o'clock he will go. When I wish to speak with him I will seek him, but it is needless for him to endeavor to see me.'"

"What a singular man!" said Urbain; "but I ought to bless him, for he has made me happy, and I accused him. I had a suspicion that he wished to guard this treasure for himself by hiding her from everyone."

"For himself," cried Blanche, "how could that be possible?"

"Forgive me, dear Blanche, love makes one jealous; I see well that I was unjust."

"Yes, yes," said Marguerite, "but hasten to get your documents drawn and marry this dear child."

The bachelor left at last, but Blanche's looks followed him and he could not doubt his happiness; he possessed the heart of an amiable girl who did not seek to hide from him the sentiments with which he inspired her. The next day Urbain took the preliminary steps to hasten his marriage; he had also to sell the little furniture he possessed, for it was very necessary to obtain some money for the journey; and, in regard to that, the bachelor soon saw that Monsieur Touquet evinced no generosity of disposition. But a lover who is about to marry his sweetheart always believes himself rich enough, and, besides, Blanche having been reared in retirement had no extravagant desires in regard to household expenses, dress or ornaments; she would be economical and simple in her tastes, which qualities are often of more value than the bride's dowry.

Evening again brought Urbain to his sweetheart; on this occasion the embarrassment had disappeared, and they gave themselves up entirely to the pleasure they experienced in seeing each other again. The time they passed together rolled on as rapidly as before, but they consoled themselves by remembering that the day would soon come when they would be united forever. On the fourth evening that Urbain passed with Blanche the door opened, and the barber made his appearance.

He slightly inclined his head to Urbain and said to him, in his ordinary brief tone, —

"Are you making preparations for your marriage?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Urbain, rising and going up to Touquet, "but you know employers never share one's impatience. However, within six days, or a little later, I should have all my papers. I have seen the priest who is to unite us and have made all my preparations for departure."

"That's well."

The barber made no further remark and left the young people, who were for a moment astonished at his conduct; but after all they were not sorry to be able to give themselves up to the pleasure of lovers' conversation with no other witnesses than old Marguerite, who sometimes went to sleep while Urbain and Blanche were silently pressing each other's hands. The time passes

quickly when one is happy, and if the days were long for the two lovers, by way of revenge each evening seemed shorter than the last. The more they saw of each other the closer love drew his meshes about their hearts, which seemed formed for adoration, and now they could not conceive the possibility of an existence apart.

But the day of their wedding approached. Only five days and they would pledge their vows at the altar; then they would leave the great city and in a peaceful retreat would enjoy pure happiness undisturbed by the storm and stress of life. This at least was the future they hoped for.

Chaudoreille, urged by a desire to receive the recompense the barber had promised him, had already presented himself three times at the latter's house, saying, —

"Has the marriage taken place?"

"Not yet," answered Touquet.

Then Chaudoreille departed, muttering, —

"I wish they'd hurry now. What the deuce! I need some money. Why, in twelve days I'd have married a dozen women."

CHAPTER III

A Day with Chaudoreille

Chaudoreille, who had not yet received the two pieces of gold which the barber had promised him found himself in his usual penniless condition as he went one fine morning down the Rue des Petits Carreaux. He was just coming from the Saint-Germain fair, where he had not on this occasion found anybody disposed to receive a lesson in skittles, and he was going towards the Saint-Laurent fair, hoping that fortune would be somewhat more favorable to him in the latter haunt.

Following his custom, Chaudoreille walked with his nose in the air, ogling from one side to the other; his left hand on his hip, and his right hand caressing his mustache. As he approached the boulevards he felt somebody pull gently at his mantle. The pusillanimous fellow started with fright, but on turning his head he perceived an old servant maid, and seeing he had nothing to fear he put his hand on his sword, and cried loudly,—

"By jingo! I thought it was a man and I was going to demand his reason for touching me.

What do you want with me? Don't pull my mantle so hard, it's a little decayed."

The old woman put her finger on her mouth, and with a mysterious air, said, —

"My mistress wishes to speak with you."

"Your mistress," cried Chaudoreille, his features becoming cheerful, for he did not doubt that he had made a conquest, "oh, that's it, my good woman, I understand you. But is she young? is she rich? is she? — Never mind, it's all the same, lead me to her."

"No, she can't receive you today, but be here tomorrow at dusk. I will come and look for you and will introduce you."

"It's enough! I'll be here, I'll not fail, whether it rains or shines. One word, if you please, messenger of love. Can you not tell me where your mistress has seen me?"

"In the street, I presume, since she was at her window. Tomorrow evening, monsieur; I can't stop any longer."

"Go, Flore! go back to Cytherée," said Chaudoreille, as the old woman went off, then he continued on his way, saying,—

"It's an amorous adventure, I know; — this mystery and a rendezvous at dusk. She has seen me through the window. By jingo! I do well to look my best; a pretty man should always carry himself as if everybody was looking at him." He then walked along, looking so much in the air

that he ran against a water-carrier who was advancing quietly with his two buckets full, and threw himself so heavily upon him that one of the buckets escaped from his hand.

"Cursed idiot," cried the Auvergnat. "Wait, take that to teach you to look before you!" Saying these words the water-carrier calmly emptied his other bucket over Chaudoreille. The chevalier was drenched. In his fury he drew Rolande from the scabbard and advanced on the Auvergnat; but the water-carrier, without appearing at all dismayed by the falchion which his adversary flashed as he capered and jumped about like one possessed, took one of his buckets in each hand and tranquilly awaited the expected onset of the doughty knight, shouting in an aggravatingly jeering tone,—

"Come on, you baked apple! come on stupid, that turnspit you term a sword doesn't frighten me in the least."

Chaudoreille put Rolande in his scabbard again and then escaped by the boulevard, crying, "Watch," and followed by all the idlers, and these were not a few, of the neighborhood. The chevalier did not pause in his flight until he was positively sure there was no longer anybody behind him. He was then quite near the Fossés Jaunes, which were excavated in the reign of Charles the Ninth, and which extended from the Porte Saint-Denis nearly to the Porte Saint-Honoré. These

had been made to still further enlarge Paris. A new wall was built along the Fossés Jaunes, and also two new gates; one, Rue Montmartre, near the Rue des Jeûneurs, replaced the old Porte Montmartre, demolished in 1633; the other, Rue Saint-Honoré, between the boulevard and the Rue Royale, replaced the one situated between the Rue Richelieu and the Rue Saint-Honoré, which was erected in 1631. On the terrace within this new wall they presently laid out the Rues de Cléry, du Mail, des Fossés-Montmartre, de Victoires, des Petits-Champs, etc. However, in the midst of these new constructions the hill of Saint-Roch still preserved its picturesque form and its windmills.

Chaudoreille was trembling, he was very cold; and he could not change at his house, for a reason that one may easily divine. Fortunately the weather was fine and the sun, while it gave little heat, shone on the promenade, established then along the wall of Paris. The chevalier saw no other means of drying himself than that of running for two or three hours in the sun, and he gave himself immediately to that exercise, looking much less in the air than formerly, and only answering some of his acquaintances, who asked him why he ran so quickly, by these words, —

"It's a wager, don't stop me. I have put up a hundred pistoles that I would sweat some great drops."

The chevalier's garments commenced to have more consistence and he stopped to take breath.

"You have missed your vocation, my friend; you should have been a runner for some prince," said a man, who had stopped with two others, and seemed to take much pleasure in looking at Chandoreille, while one of his companions, of an extraordinarily stout build, laughed at the top of his voice, and the third making comical gestures and extraordinary grimaces seemed to be trying to copy the features and the figure of the runner.

"What do you say, monsieur," said the son of Gascony to the three individuals, who had stopped before him, "can't one run if he wants to, capedebious!"

"Oh, his accent renders him even more comical," said the fat man. "Look at him well, comrades, it's necessary to reproduce that figure for us this evening. It will be worth its weight in gold."

"I have it," responded the third. "Hang it! may I die if I don't copy it this evening, feature for feature."

"Have you looked at me long enough," said Chandoreille, eyeing them from the back, because he did not feel enough courage to look them in the face. "What do you take me to be?"

"Oh, hang it!" said Turlupin, to himself, for it was he who was walking with his two companions, Guillaume and Gautier-Garguille. "We

must try to make the little man angry. That can't fail to amuse us."

Approaching Chaudoreille, who was reflecting on the grimace he should make, he commenced by striking Rolande's scabbard with the stick which he held in his hand, saying, —

"What the devil do you call that, seigneur chevalier?"

The chevalier became at one moment pale, red, and yellow.

"These men are desirous of seeking a quarrel with me," said he to himself, looking around him to see if he could make his retreat. But already some passers-by had stopped and formed a circle; for, having recognized the three comedians who had been drawing crowds at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, they did not doubt they were going to play some farce with the personage whom they were surrounding. The sight of all these people calmed Chaudoreille's fear a little.

"It is unlikely," said he to himself, "that they will let these three men kill me without rescuing me." He then endeavored to put a good face on the matter. Glancing at the crowd with what he meant to be a look of assurance, he exclaimed, —

"I don't understand why these gentlemen molest me. I take everybody to witness that I have not insulted them."

A general laugh was the only answer Chaudoreille received, which had the effect of increasing

his ill-humor; he angrily drew down his little hat in such a way that the gold-colored rosette almost touched the tip of his nose, and tried to make his way through the crowd, but they drew closer to him on every side, and he found himself face to face with Turlupin, who put himself on guard with his stick; Chaudoreille turned another way and was confronted by Gautier-Garguille, who had placed his hat precisely in the same manner as Chaudoreille's, and imitated exactly his piteous grimaces; finally, Gros-Guillaume barred the chevalier's passage with his enormous corpulence.

Chaudoreille was exasperated, he could bear no more and he drew Rolande. Turlupin advanced to the combat with his cane, and the chevalier, having eyed his adversary's weapon out of the corner of his eye, put himself on guard, crying,—

"Look to it, guard yourself carefully; I ply a very strong blade."

At the end of the third bout Turlupin feigned to be wounded; he fell, uttering a horrible groan, and making a frightful contortion. Gros-Guillaume threw himself down beside him, exclaiming,—

"He is dead!"

Chaudoreille was stunned and bewildered; he still held his sword in his hand and looked at everyone as if distracted. Gautier-Garguille took him by the arm and led him away, saying,—

"Save yourself; you have killed the son of the King of Cochin-China."

"Save yourself; you have killed the son of the king of Cochin-China."

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY WILLIAM GLACKENS.

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Chaudoreille listened no further; he went on his way, left Paris and darted across the fields and the marshes; the three hours he had spent in running in the sun had not strained his legs, he felt no fatigue; fear lent him wings, and he did not stop until he believed that he had escaped the pursuit of which he imagined himself to be the object. It may seem astonishing, perhaps, that the chevalier had not recognized, in the three men who had stopped him on the boulevard, the three comedians whose performances were then in great vogue, and who permitted themselves a thousand licenses that the Parisians authorized, and which delighted even the great noblemen. But when Chaudoreille had any money he passed the greater part of his time in gambling houses, and had been but rarely to the theatre called the Hôtel de Bourgogne; besides, Turlupin and Gautier-Garguille were so adept in the art of changing their physiognomies that it was difficult to recognize them unless one had often witnessed their performances.

The fugitive had stopped to breathe for a moment, he looked timidly about him and recognized the locality; he was at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, near the Vallée de Fécamp, and he perceived about three hundred paces from him the Marquis de Villebelle's little house.

Chaudoreille had fasted since the evening before, he was overcome with fatigue and believed himself menaced by the greatest dangers. In such

circumstances he forgot that the barber had forbidden him to go there and decided to ring at the little house and seek refuge.

Collecting his strength he turned towards the dwelling; he rang the bell, and Marcel opened the door almost immediately.

"What, is it you?" said he in astonishment. "Did the marquis or M. Touquet send you here?"

Before answering, Chaudoreille entered the garden, and closed the door after him.

"But what the devil is the matter with you?" said Marcel. "What are you doing here?—and your face is in such a state, all in a cold sweat; one would believe, on my word, that you'd all the sergeants of Paris at your heels."

"And you wouldn't be mistaken," said Chaudoreille, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Why, what are you saying?"

"That I'm pursued, or at least I shall be. That the greatest danger threatens me."

"My God! What have you done?"

"I've killed the son of the King of Cochin-China."

"The son of Cochin-China?"

"Why, yes, just now, not more than a few minutes ago, against the Fosses-Jaunes — near the Porte Saint-Denis—but it was in honorable combat, a duel with equal weapons; and Rolande laid him at my feet. Heavens, what a cry he uttered

as he fell — it still rings in my ears. I slaughtered him like a bullock."

Marcel listened with his habitual good-humor; however, Chaudoreille's story appeared so extraordinary that he could not refrain from exclaiming, —

"But, truly, can all that be possible?"

"What, by jingo, you question its possibility, — my dear Marcel, it's absolutely true. You know me; you know that I'm a hot-headed fellow, a rake of honor. It's a habit I've formed, and what can you expect. I can't reform myself. But this time, at all events, it was not my fault. I was walking quietly along by the city wall; all of a sudden three men came before me and uttered some jokes which were very much out of place and offended me; I politely asked them to allow me to pass, but they still obstructed my way. I immediately drew my sword, the crowd surrounded us, one of my adversaries put himself on guard. I immediately rushed on him; the combat was terrible. My enemy fought desperately; but soon he fell at my feet, making frightful grimaces, and one of his companions told me I had killed the heir to the throne of Cochin-China."

"And what the devil was the Prince of Cochin-China doing on the boulevards with two idiots who allowed him to fight with you?"

"Faith, I didn't have time to get any informa-

tion on that point; he had no doubt come to Paris to take some exercise — the poor fellow. But you can imagine that this adventure will become notorious; they'll send out a description of me; they'll put all the squads in Paris in pursuit of me; my dear Marcel, it's necessary that you should hide me for several days."

"I'm very sorry to say that I can't do it; I thought you'd been sent here by my master with orders for me; since that's not the case you must go, for he has expressly forbidden me to receive anybody here except those that are sent to me. M. de Villebelle will discharge me if, on arriving suddenly with some of his friends, he should find a stranger in the place."

"Zounds! I'm not a stranger, since I've already served your master in his love affairs. My dear Marcel, you don't wish my death."

"No, but I don't wish to lose my place."

"You are alone here?"

"Of course I am; but monseigneur may come when one is least expecting him."

"He won't come today."

"You don't know anything about it."

"I beg your pardon; I know that his presence is commanded at court. I only ask shelter of you until tomorrow — but, Marcel, my life is in your hands."

"Come, your fright is very ill-timed."

"The Cochin-Chinas will be leagued against me."

"Let them league themselves."

"I've eaten nothing since yesterday."

"I'm not to blame for that."

"Marcel, will nothing move you; do you want me to throw myself at your feet? Well, behold me there. You are softening, you yield; I see tears in your eyes."

"Well, only just till tomorrow; but hang it, if monseigneur should arrive this evening?"

"I promise you I'll jump over the wall."

Chaudoreille breathed more freely; and directed his steps towards the house.

"Oh, delightful purlieus, how has my destiny changed since I quitted you," said the chevalier, drawing out his little silk handkerchief to dry his eyes. But on reaching the dining-room, which he recognized, his sadness appeared somewhat lessened. He was the first to seat himself at the table; he invited Marcel to go to the cellar, and did not give him a moment's rest until the supper was served; for it was then five o'clock, and in those days everybody dined at midday.

"I'm not hungry yet," said Marcel, as he seated himself, "ordinarily I don't sup until eight o'clock."

"Oh, never mind that, I can eat for both of us, and it needn't prevent our supping at eight o'clock; for I do not wish to make any change in your usual habits. O my friend, what a day's work; if you knew all that had happened to me.

At first it began very well; an amorous rendezvous given to me by a lady who fell in love with me through seeing me from her window."

"Pshaw!"

"Give me a wing of that fowl. Yes, my friend, a passion I inspired while watching the flight of some swallows — but — I am used to that. Pour me out something to drink. I'm sure she's a woman of high rank. She sent to me by one of her slaves, I think it was a mulatto, or she must take a devil of a lot of snuff, for her nose was the color of terra-cotta."

"And when are you to meet?"

"Tomorrow evening. But at present, can I think of it? This unfortunate duel has spoiled all my plans. They'll perhaps put me in the Bastile for five or six years."

"Well, you are a fool."

"Oh, do you think that anyone may kill the Prince of Cochin-China like a little shopkeeper of the Marais. My situation is alarming. Give me some pasty, I beg of you."

"Did you satisfy yourself that your man was dead?"

"If you had heard the cry he uttered as he fell, you would not doubt it yourself. It's a cursed day's work; that thief of a water-carrier brought this ill luck upon me!"

"A water-carrier?"

"Yes, one with whom I fought this morning."

"Are you always fighting?"

"Well, by jingo, I can't take twenty steps without fighting; the government should give me a pension to remain at home. What, another stroke of ill luck? Good God! it seems to me I hear a great deal of noise outside."

"What does it matter to us, it's only some pages, lackeys, or students who are amusing themselves by fighting; oh, I'm accustomed to all that."

"It's more likely they're coming to arrest me."

"Nothing of the kind, I tell you."

"Well, Marcel, you're very fortunate in not being a man of the sword."

"A stick serves just as well to defend me; but I don't seek a quarrel with anyone."

"You're very right; I envy your gentle urbanity. But I believe I hear nothing more. Give me something to drink. I feel calmer."

"Have you done eating?"

"Yes, I can now wait till supper. Marcel, it was here we wagered on the flies."

"I remember it."

"Will you take part in a game to pass the time?"

"Much obliged; but I didn't like the game."

"Oh, it wasn't that one I was about to propose; but I believe I happen to have some cards in my pocket. Come, a hand at piquet?"

"No, I don't care to play."

"Why, by jingo! it's only to pass a few hours; we shan't ruin ourselves; I haven't more than two pieces of gold about me; and when I shall have lost that, to the devil with me if I continue."

Marcel yielded to Chaudoreille's solicitations, who immediately set out the table and drew a pack of cards from his pocket, looking at them tenderly as he placed them between himself and Marcel, saying,—

"We'll play for a crown on each side."

"It's too much."

"Pooh! one lost, another gained; it's only between the pair of us."

"Yes, but if one wins all."

"Nonsense, we are equally good players."

"But you haven't laid your money down."

"I've told you I've nothing but gold, I'll change it when I've lost some hundreds."

They commenced to play. Chaudoreille's face was animated, his eyes were shining, and seemed as if they would leave their orbits to look at his adversary's play.

"These cards are not new," said Marcel, "they are all stained or marked."

"That's because they've been so much used apparently. I leave it to you," said Chaudoreille, looking carefully at the backs of the cards which were at the bottom of the pack.

"Hang it! you've made me a pretty present; there, these are the seven and the eight."

Chaudoreille won the first game, then a second and a third, because, thanks to the marks he had made on the back of each card, he knew them as well by their backs as by their faces.

"It's singular," said Marcel, "that I never win anything; you always have the best cards."

"What would you have? It's chance, luck; but it will probably turn."

The luck did not turn and Marcel's crowns passed into Chaudoreille's pocket. The chevalier was scarlet, trembling, and the veins on his forehead were swollen by the ardor of his play, when the bell at the garden gate rang violently.

"Oh, the deuce! there's somebody," said Marcel.

"I am lost!" cried Chaudoreille jumping on his chair, "it is somebody come to arrest me."

He immediately rose and ran around the room, went through the first door he saw and disappeared, without listening to Marcel, who called to him,—

"It's monseigneur; it's M. de Villebelle; keep still and I'll let you out without his seeing you."

But Chaudoreille had disappeared and the bell continued to ring. Marcel was obliged to open the gate without knowing what had become of his guest.

CHAPTER IV

The Little Supper

"And pray why did you make us wait so long, clown?" said the marquis angrily to Marcel, as he entered the garden with three men, two of whom were enveloped in their cloaks, while the third had no hat and nothing to cover his velvet doublet, which was stained in many places with mud; this, however, did not prevent its owner from bursting into shouts of laughter as he looked at himself, as though he still enjoyed some frolic in which he had participated.

"Follow me, my friends," said the marquis.

"Oh, I know the way to your little nest of the Faubourg," said one, "it's not the first time I've come here."

"Nor me."

"That's all very well; as for me, messieurs, I make my first appearance here today and in a brilliant costume I hope. Ha! Ha! What the devil! if anybody should happen to divine that I ought to be present this evening at the petit coucher, 'twould be deuced awkward for me!"

"Come, Marcel, show us a light," said the marquis, pushing the valet before him, while the

latter, anxious and uneasy, was constantly glancing around him.

"You've been sleeping already, rascal, for you look stupefied."

"Yes, monseigneur, that's true, I have been asleep."

"He lives the life of a canon here. He does nothing but eat and sleep."

While speaking they had reached the house. Happily for Marcel the marquis never went into the lower room, where the card table was still standing. They went up into the apartment on the first floor. Marcel lighted many candles, while the marquis' friends threw themselves into arm-chairs, and Villebelle took off his mantle, saying,—

"Come, hasten yourself, and serve us supper of all that you can get together; there are always provisions here. You have a poultry yard, a pigeon house; put some fowls quickly on the spit. We'll play while waiting for them to be served. Prepare the card table. Open that drawer, there are some cards and dice in it. Gentlemen, you will perhaps have meagre fare. I did not expect the pleasure of entertaining you this evening, but at least you shall have some good wine. The cellar is well furnished and we shall not lack champagne."

"Hang it! that's the principal thing," said a big, pale young man whose features were regular, but who was disfigured by the scar of a sword-cut across his left cheek.

"I, too, am of the vicomte's opinion," said his neighbor, who appeared to be some years older, and whose stoutness and high color contrasted with the physique of the first speaker.

"Champagne before everything."

"Oh, I recognize there that drunkard De Montgéran," said the young man with disordered costume. "As for me I am not displeased when the entertainment consists of wine. But let's play, gentlemen, let's play; it's necessary that I should recoup a hat and a cloak."

"You might even add a doublet; for I don't think that you can present yourself anywhere in that one."

"Those cursed shopkeepers, how they did resist this evening. That's all right, I had flogged three of them."

"Yes, but except for the marquis and you would have been in a very bad position."

"Well! what the devil brought the quarrel about? for I don't know yet why I fought."

"A trifling thing, a mere bagatelle; because I was carrying off with me a little bookkeeper's wife, the impertinent husband permitted himself to shout! The idiot, I should have sent his wife back at the end of two days. Hang it! I'd no desire to keep her."

"Perhaps that's why he was angry."

"I said a couple of words for him to the superintendent; before long our clerk will be destitute."

"That's as it should be, it's necessary to teach these plebeians manners, who persuade themselves that they only take a wife for themselves."

"In your place I should have asked for a lettre-de-cachet."

"We shall see; that might still be done."

During this conversation Marcel had prepared everything; he went down to the groundfloor and, while making his preparations for supper, called his comrade in a low tone, and looked in every corner of the room, but he had disappeared.

"Where the devil has he hidden himself," said Marcel, who then looked in all the other rooms and went down to the cellar, where he called Chaudoreille again without receiving any answer. "He has apparently escaped into the garden and from there he will have jumped over the walls, as he said he would do. However, that astonishes me, for he would hardly care to leave the house."

The marquis and his companions sat down to play, and while waiting for the supper they cracked several bottles of champagne to put themselves in good spirits; that is to say, to arouse in them the desire to commit new follies. The most extravagant bets were proposed and accepted, and while playing, drinking, singing, each one related his good fortune, his gallant adventures, drew his mistress' portrait, and passed in review the women of fashion, sparing the honest women no more than the courtesans.

At last Marcel came to announce that supper was served in a neighboring room and the gentlemen left their play to go to the table. The room in which the supper was served equalled by its elegance the other rooms of this delightful retreat; while it served habitually for banquets, the beauty and the taste of its frescoes, the statues which decorated it, the sofas which furnished it, the lustres which lighted it, recalled the salons of ancient Rome where Horace, Propertius and Tibulus, surrounded by their friends and their competitors, sang of love and the charms of their mistresses while passing amphoræ filled with falernian, or carrying to their lips cups where sparkled cæcubum or massicum; and while crowned with myrtle and acanthus, in order to resemble their deities, proving only too well that they had all the weaknesses of mortals.

Sybarites of a later time, the young men assembled at Villebelle's drank deep draughts of the generous wine with which the table was so amply provided; the marquis furnishing them an example by his avidity in emptying the flasks. Decorum and etiquette were banished from the repast, where liberty often degenerated into license. The convives had drawn the sofas to the table, and each one, half lying down like a pasha, held a glass of champagne which he emptied, shouting with laughter at the follies of which he heard or at those which he had himself committed.

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DE CHAVAGNAC.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY G A WILLIAMS

The young man who had come without a hat, and who was called the Chevalier de Chavagnac, was seated opposite a beautiful statue representing Psyche, to which he often raised his eyes. All of a sudden he interrupted the fat Montgéran, who was singing, by exclaiming, —

"May the thunder crush me, if this Psyche didn't move!"

"What the devil are you saying now?" asked the marquis.

"I'm saying, I'm saying your Psyche has come to life, or I must be blind."

"Oh, hang it, how delightful it would be if that pretty woman could come and take her place amongst us."

"Gentlemen, it was no doubt Montgéran's voice which worked this miracle. A new Pygmalion, he softens marble."

"You needn't make fun of my voice, gentlemen, it is held in no small estimation. It must rather have been your cynical conversation which made poor Psyche blush. But let me sing instead of listening to De Chavagnac's stupidity, who can't see clearly because he has drunk so much."

"Yes, assuredly, I have been drinking, but I can still see. I've been looking at that statue for a long while, and several times it appeared to me as if it moved."

"Marquis, are there any ghosts in your little house?"

"I have never seen any here, but it would be very amiable of them to come and pay us a visit while we are at table. We would make them hob-nob with us."

"Come sing, Montgéran, we will listen to you; but be a trifle less artificial. I prefer the natural method."

"Yes, gentlemen, I will then give you; 'The shepherd in order to admire the charms of his shepherdess took the first' —"

"Now, I shall know what it is," said De Chavagnac, rising precipitately and running towards the statue. As he neared it the Psyche made so lively a movement that she would have fallen from her pedestal on to the floor, if the young man had not received her in his arms, and placed her on the ground. All the convives had their eyes fixed on De Chavagnac, who, after placing the Psyche in safety, reapproached the pedestal, which was about three feet high and one and one half in circumference.

"There is something inside it," cried the young man, who perceived that the pedestal was hollow, and had an opening in the side which was turned towards the wall.

"Someone inside it?" repeated the others, half rising. At the same moment a thin, trembling voice, which seemed to come out of the earth, uttered these words, —

"No violence, gentlemen, I will yield without

resistance," and, in a moment, Chaudoreille's little head peeped from behind the pedestal and showed itself to the gentlemen, who burst into a shout of laughter, exclaiming, —

"What a handsome face!"

However, De Chavagnac, who had remained near the niche of the statue, took Chaudoreille by the mustache and forced him to emerge from his hiding place. Then, having examined the personage whose piteous face rendered him still more comic, he went laughingly to take his place at the table, while the poor devil whom he had dislodged threw himself on his knees before them and without daring to raise his eyes murmured, clasping his hands, —

"Gentlemen if I have killed the Prince of Cochin-China it was against my will and because he had provoked me, but I swear to you that I will not try it again; I will not even carry Rolande, if they exact it of me."

"What the devil is he saying?"

"Do you understand any of it, marquis?"

"My faith, no! He is speaking about the Prince of Cochin-China."

"He's a fool!"

"Hang it! we must amuse ourselves with him."

"One moment; it is necessary that I should learn how this clown penetrated here. Hello! Marcel, Marcel."

While Marcel was coming upstairs Chaudo-

reille's terror became somewhat lessened. While he had been immured in the pedestal a murmuring sound only penetrated to his ears, and he believed that the room was filled with armed men who were looking for him. Now the words which he caught, the name of the marquis which he heard pronounced, taught him the truth. Reassured that his life was in no danger, he began to glance pleadingly at the persons who surrounded the table, and meeting nothing but laughing faces he entirely recovered his spirits.

Marcel entered and, at the sight of Chaudoreille, remained stunned and confused before his master.

"Who is this man, Marcel?" said the marquis. "Is he a thief? is it he or you whom we ought to hang? Come, speak, clown, and tell us the truth, or you shall be chastised in good fashion."

Marcel, trembling, did not know how to excuse himself for having received someone despite the commands of the marquis, and muttered, —

"Monseigneur, I couldn't help it, I did not wish to, I refused him at first."

"Monseigneur," exclaimed Chaudoreille, rising and standing on his tiptoes, "if you will permit me I will relate to your excellency how all this happened, for I see that Marcel will find it difficult to come to an end."

"The trembler has recovered his speech," said the big Montgéran, who could not take his eyes from Chaudoreille.

"Come, marquis, let him speak."

"Yes, yes, he will make us laugh," cried the others.

"Very well, gentlemen, since you desire it. Come, speak, you little cur; and you, Marcel, remain there to give him the lie if he attempts to deceive us."

Though the sobriquet, little cur, made Chaudoreille knit his brow, permission to speak before noblemen of high rank caused him so much pleasure that he immediately assumed a smiling expression, and commenced his speech, —

"Messeigneurs, your excellencies behold in me Loustic-Goliath de Chaudoreille, Knight of the Round Table; descended on the male side from the famous Milo of Crotona, and on the female side from the celebrated Delilah, who, sacrificing herself for her country, had the courage to cut from Samson, her lover, that which made his strength."

Shouts of laughter here interrupted the orator. "It's delightful! he's charming! He's worth his weight in gold!"

"Hang it!" said Chaudoreille, "I was sure that I only had to speak."

"In fact, descendant of Delilah," said the marquis, "what is your business?"

Chaudoreille appeared embarrassed for the moment, then he exclaimed volubly, —

"Defender and protector of beauty — and of

gambling houses; understanding how to bear arms and to play at piquet; teaching music, and the way to turn the king or ace at will; succoring young men of family and girls who have been seduced; bearer of love letters; master of the sitar; duellist and messenger, — and all at a very moderate price."

"But what a treasure we have in this man!"

"Finally, who led you here?"

"Your excellencies have heard me speak of my duel this morning. I killed the Prince of Cochin-China near the Porte Saint-Denis."

"The Prince of Cochin-China, and where the devil did you find such a prince as that?"

"By the side of the Fosses-Jaunes. I was walking quietly along, he came up and assaulted me, and I fought him. Isn't that true, Marcel?"

"Yes, it's very true that he told me all that, monseigneur. He arrived here wild with fright, and exhausted; he told me that he was pursued, and though I did not understand all his history of the prince, I saw that he trembled, so I consented to allow him to come in for a moment. We were having supper when you came in, monseigneur, and immediately he fled, seeing and hearing nothing."

"Yes, monseigneur," said Chaudoreille, "I believed that the archers and the sergeants were coming to arrest me, and I hid in the first place that I could see."

"Do you think, clown, that I believe the story you told Marcel in order to get some supper?"

"Monseigneur, I swear to you!"

"Peace!"

"There were witnesses to the duel."

"Silence, I tell you! To come to this house to seek Marcel, you must have known that he lived here. Who taught you the way to this dwelling? Did you know that it belonged to me? and if you knew it belonged to me, who gave you the audacity to present yourself here."

Chaudoreille, who perceived that the marquis was no longer joking, answered with less assurance, —

"Monseigneur, I've already had the honor of visiting here in your lordship's service."

"To serve me, rascal?"

"Yes, monseigneur; I served you indirectly in a certain matter with a young Italian, an elopement on the Pont de Latournelle. It was I whom Touquet charged to keep watch."

"O marquis," said the three guests, smiling, "this is clear enough. The chevalier of the Round Table has ministered to your love."

"I've had that honor, monseigneurs," answered Chaudoreille, bowing, and twisting his mustaches.

"Hang it! I don't remember it," cried the marquis, looking hard at Chaudoreille. "What, Touquet, so clever, so inventive, could he be

served by such a marionette. Come, that is not possible."

"Monseigneur," said Chaudoreille, compressing his lips, "if you knew the talents of the one you call marionette, you would, perhaps, speak differently. Touquet himself is only a beginner beside me."

"Oh, as to that, clown, it is necessary that you should justify your boasting or that you should perish beneath the stick. For some days I have been suffering from ennui; I don't find anyone, at the court or in the town, who deserves my homage. My Italian, even, has commenced to tire me. I wish — I don't know — I would give all the world for the capacity of falling truly in love; find me a woman who is capable of inspiring me with this feeling. I will give you twenty-four hours to discover this treasure for me. A hundred pistoles for you if you gratify my wishes, a hundred strokes of the stick if you are not successful."

"That's it! That's it," shouted Villebelle's guests, "if he is successful in what you have given him to do, tell us and we will employ him in turn."

"O capededious," said Chaudoreille to himself, "a hundred pistoles if I render him amorous. Zounds! my fortune will be made. But a hundred blows of the stick if I am not successful. How can I render a man amorous who is tired of everything, and that in twenty-four hours. O my

genius inspire me! Ah, if my portress resembled this Psyche."

"Wait, drink that," said Montgéran, presenting Chaudoreille with a large glass full of madeira. "That will help you, perhaps, to find what Villebelle wants."

Chaudoreille emptied the glass at a draught, after humbly bowing to the company; then he struck his forehead sharply, made a leap forward, and exclaimed, —

"I have found her!"

"The wine has already operated," said De Chavagnac.

"Come, speak," cried the marquis, "what have you found?"

"Monseigneur," said Chaudoreille, bowing with respect, "deign to permit me to speak to you without witnesses."

"The clown is right," said the marquis rising from the table. "If he should speak before you each one would wish to assure himself of the truth of his recital, and we should become rivals. Marcel carry a light into the next room. Come, my Chaudoreille, I will give you an audience. Have patience, gentlemen, I shall not be long."

Saying these words, the marquis went into the next room, and Chaudoreille followed him with an air so important and mysterious that it greatly amused the three persons who remained at the table.

When Chaudoreille found himself alone with the marquis, he examined the doors to see if they were shut, and stooped to look under the table, but the marquis pulled him by the ear, saying, —

"What signifies all this ceremony?"

"Monseigneur, it is that I'm about to speak of something mysterious, a secret, and I don't wish that anybody should know it. I shall expose myself to great danger in speaking; they will perhaps want to take my life."

"You'll expose yourself to a great deal more by not speaking," said the marquis impatiently, seizing the fire shovel.

"I'm about to do so, monseigneur. I wager you've never seen Touquet's daughter."

"Touquet's daughter. Has he a daughter?"

"Not exactly, monseigneur; she's only a child that he adopted about ten years ago."

"Touquet adopted a child? Hang it! that surprises me."

"I was very sure, monseigneur, that you were ignorant of the circumstance."

"There's something mysterious about it."

"Very extraordinary. No one would guard a girl so closely unless he were keeping her for himself."

"What is this girl like?"

"She's an angel, monseigneur, divinely beautiful, an enchantress; hardly sixteen years of age, with the figure of a nymph, and Touquet spreads

it abroad that she is ugly and ill-made, that there is nothing pleasing about her. He has even ordered me to tell it all about. If I have seen young Blanche it's only because the barber, wishing to have her taught music, was obliged to introduce me into her room, which she never leaves."

"This is all very singular," said the marquis, "and you pique my curiosity."

"Good! I shall have a hundred pistoles," said Chaudoreille to himself, "that's much better than the two golden crowns which the barber promised me, to say nothing of the honor of acting as the Marquis of Villebelle's business man."

"And you say it's not because he is in love with her himself that he hides this young girl," resumed the marquis, after a moment.

"No, monseigneur, for a few days from now he is about to marry her."

"To marry her?"

"Yes, monseigneur, to a young man whom the beautiful Blanche did not know, I am sure; for no one ever went near her except your humble servant. I bet that Touquet has sacrificed her, and that the poor little thing hates her future husband."

Here Chaudoreille said what he did not think, but he imagined it more prudent to present the matter in that aspect.

The marquis reflected for some moments, then he said, —

"Tell me quickly all that you know about the adoption of that young girl."

"Yes, monseigneur. About ten years ago, Touquet, who then had not a sou, took lodgers in addition to his business as a barber and bath-keeper. One evening a gentleman went to his house, with a little girl five or six years old, and requested a bed. Touquet received him. The traveller went out the same evening, leaving his little girl with Touquet, and that night he was murdered in the Rue Saint-Honoré near the Barrière des Sergents."

"Were the murderers discovered," said the marquis, looking attentively at Chaudoreille.

"Oh, no, monseigneur," responded the latter, smiling almost imperceptibly, "but — sometime afterwards Touquet was possessed of enough to buy the house which he had rented."

The marquis made a sudden movement, like that of a man who is about to step on a snake. A long silence succeeded, during which Chaudoreille kept his eyes bent on the ground, not daring to seek to read those of the marquis.

"And it is the daughter of that man whom he adopted," said Villebelle, breaking the silence.

"Yes, monseigneur, it is she."

"What was her father's name?"

"Moranval, at least, so I believe. Nothing was found upon him but an insignificant letter, which gave no information in regard to his family."

"And his daughter is beautiful?"

"As far as I am competent to judge, monseigneur, and if you should see her —"

"Yes, I shall see her."

"Monseigneur, I have the honor to inform you that Touquet has expressly forbidden me to speak of young Blanche and of her coming marriage. In order to be agreeable to your lordship I have sacrificed myself; but the barber is wicked, very wicked. I beg of you, monseigneur, not to tell him that you learned all this from me."

"Be easy about that."

"In any case I beg to be allowed to claim the protection of monseigneur in regard to my duel with the Prince of Cochin-China, which is not a falsehood as monseigneur appears to believe."

The marquis was reflecting deeply; finally he rose, saying to Chaudoreille, —

"Follow me, and not a word of all this. In twenty-four hours you will return here, and if you have not deceived me you will receive the recompense which I have promised you."

Chaudoreille bowed nearly to the ground and followed the marquis. They returned to the banquet hall, where his guests awaited with impatience Villebelle's return.

"Well," said De Chavagnac, as he entered, "was it worth the trouble of leaving the table?"

"I think so," answered the marquis; "but as to that I shall be better able to tell you after

tomorrow. Chaudoreille, go down with Marcel and make him give you some supper before you leave." The latter did not wait for this order to be repeated. He went down to look for Marcel and, already assuming a patronizing air, made the valet serve him with all that he thought best, while saying to his old friend, —

"I am in great favor with your master, treat me well and I can say two words for you. Above all never refuse to play a game of piquet with me, or I'll cause you to lose favor with monseigneur."

Poor Marcel, who understood nothing of all this, allowed his intimate friend to beat him at six games. Finally, day appeared, and Chaudoreille left the house saying, —

"I shall come back this evening at ten o'clock. The marquis has made an appointment with me." Then he ventured into the Faubourg, stopping whenever he saw from afar two men together, and with a mysterious air inquiring of some shopkeepers if they had heard anyone speak of the death of Cochin-China. As nobody understood what he said, he finally persuaded himself that his prince was dead, but that nobody knew who he was, and more tranquil as to the result of the affair he at length ventured to reënter Paris.

After the secret interview of the marquis and Chaudoreille, the four profligates returned to their play; but the party was no longer gay. Villebelle was preoccupied and took little part in the con-

versation; the vicomte was sleepy; fat Montgéran no longer sang, and Chavagnac was tired of losing. At six o'clock in the morning these gentlemen separated, each one returning to his dwelling in the city and the marquis reëntered his hotel, reflecting on all that Chaudoreille had told him.

CHAPTER V

Having Money and Power One May Dare Everything

"Only two days more and I shall be your husband, my Blanche," said Urbain, pressing the young girl's hands in a tender transport.

"Oh, my dearest, how very happy we shall be, when we no longer have to part, even for a few hours," answered Blanche, smiling at her lover, "how much I shall like living in the country! I shall breathe more freely there in the pure air, I am sure, than in this close room. We shall play and run on the grass, shall we not, dear?"

"Yes, and we will work in our own garden."

"How delightful! We shall have flowers then, and I am so passionately fond of them."

"We shall have some cows also, I hope," said Marguerite.

"Oh, yes, dear nurse, and some pigeons, and rabbits and fowls—it will all be so delightful. It seems to me that when I was a very little child I lived in the country, in a house where they had all those things."

"Poor Blanche! and is that all you remember of your infancy?"

"I still remember a lady who was always with me, who often kissed me; no doubt she was my mother."

"Poor woman!" said Marguerite; "perhaps she is still living; and to think that no one knows. But away with sad thoughts!"

"Then you'll not regret Paris, my dear Blanche," said Urbain.

"Would you wish me to regret it, dear, when you are with me?"

"Those dear children!" said the old servant rising from her chair; "it is Providence which has brought them together, for they are made for one another. But it's nine o'clock, Monsieur Urbain, you must go."

"Nine o'clock already! The time is approaching when we need part no more, but the days seem very long now, because I spend them away from you."

"It's the same with me, dear; it seems to me that evening will never come."

"I haven't seen M. Touquet for some days."

"And you'll not see him this evening," said Marguerite; "he received a letter after dinner. It was no doubt some pressing matter of business, for he left immediately and has not yet returned."

"Good-by, then, dear Blanche."

"Good-by, my dear."

"Two days more. It seems a long time to wait."

"You have managed to live through a fortnight," said Marguerite.

"Yes, I don't know why, but these last few days seem to me as if they would be eternal."

Urbain could not tear himself away from Blanche; his heart was oppressed; the eyes of both the young lovers were filled with tears; the young girl extended her hand to her friend and he pressed it to his heart.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," said Blanche, "but your going makes me sadder than usual."

"What childishness!" said Marguerite; "no one would suppose that you were going to meet within two days. Isn't M. Urbain coming to-morrow evening? Come, come, it's time to go to bed."

The lovers again said good-by, sighing deeply, and Urbain finally followed Marguerite, who shut the street door on him and then went upstairs to Blanche and scolded her for her sadness. But she could not restore her gayety, for the dictates of reason may persuade the mind, but cannot allay the fears of the heart.

Not more than a quarter of an hour after Urbain's departure some one rapped loudly at the street door.

"That's Urbain, no doubt," said Blanche; "he saw that I was sad and has come back to console me."

"That's very improbable," said Marguerite; "it's more likely M. Touquet who has returned. However, I am astonished that he should knock, for I thought he had taken his master key."

"Go and see who it is, dear nurse."

"Yes, yes, mademoiselle; but if it should not be monsieur? It is late—we are alone in the house, and I don't know if I ought to open to any one."

"Do you want me to look out of the window, dear nurse, I shall very soon see if it's Urbain."

"Yes, do so; that seems to me more prudent."

Blanche had already opened the window, and she looked down into the street; the night was dark, but love renders the sight clear, and the young girl soon saw that it was not Urbain.

"Who is there," demanded Marguerite, thrusting out her head.

A deep voice answered, "I come from Master Touquet, he has charged me with a commission to his adopted daughter, Mademoiselle Blanche."

"How very singular," said Marguerite to Blanche. "What! monsieur, who has hidden you from everybody's sight, sends a stranger to us at this hour?"

"But, dear nurse, since he has sent him, it is necessary to open to this gentleman. Perhaps something has happened to my protector."

"Is the man alone, my child?"

"Yes, dear nurse, I see nobody but him."

"Why don't you open the door," cried the man in the street, "my message is urgent."

"Wait one moment, somebody will be there. — Remain here, my child."

Marguerite went down, holding her lamp in her hand. She was not reassured, but opened the door, and a man wrapped in a large cloak, his head covered with a plumed hat, appeared before her.

"You've been very slow, my good woman," said he, smiling, "however, I'll indemnify you for the trouble I have caused you."

While saying these words, he slipped several pieces of gold into Marguerite's hand. The old woman did not know if she ought to accept them, but said to herself, "His manners are not those of a robber."

The stranger quickly entered the alleyway and the old woman as she looked at him said to herself, "This is not the first time that I have seen that figure, and I remember his voice. Yes, I believe that that's the friend my master was waiting for so late some time ago."

Marguerite was not deceived, it was in fact the marquis who had introduced himself into the house, having first sent the barber a letter in which he gave him a rendezvous outside, and ordered him to wait there until ten o'clock in the evening.

"Monsieur has been here before, I believe,"

said Marguerite, reassured on recognizing one whom she believed to be her master's friend.

"Yes, yes, my good mother, I have often been here; but hasten to lead me to your young mistress. It is absolutely necessary that I should see her."

"Is my master ill?—has he been involved in some quarrel? Many accidents happen in this city."

"Don't be uneasy, there's nothing of that kind."

The marquis followed Marguerite, who led him to Blanche's chamber, and opened the door, saying,—

"Mademoiselle, here is a gentleman who brings you a message from M. Touquet."

Blanche took some steps forward to meet the stranger; the marquis had entered abruptly, but on perceiving the young girl he paused, and for some moments remained motionless, occupied in contemplating her. There was something in the aspect of the marquis which compelled respect, and while at that moment there was nothing severe in his expression, the astonishment and admiration depicted on his features lent additional animation to his naturally proud and noble look. Blanche involuntarily lowered her eyes, for she could not meet the fixed gaze with which the marquis seemed to examine her person, and Marguerite dared not utter a word, because the stranger intimidated her also.

"This is truly beyond all that I could have imagined," said the marquis, as if he were speaking to himself.

"Monsieur," said Blanche, with embarrassment, "my nurse informs me that you have something to say to me, some message from my benefactor; has anything happened to him, monsieur?"

"No, lovely Blanche, no; your benefactor, since you deign to so call him, has run into no danger, but I would brave a thousand if by that means I could make you take the same interest in me."

Blanche glanced timidly at the marquis as if she were waiting for him to explain himself better; the latter, in hastening to lead her to a chair, dropped a corner of his mantle, allowing his rich attire to be seen, and Marguerite said under her breath to the young girl, —

"Mon Dieu, my child, look at those precious stones, that lace, this is at least a great nobleman."

"Oh, yes," answered Blanche, in the same tone, "it is superb, but I like Urbain's costume much better."

Villebelle, who had not taken his eyes from Blanche, remained silent.

"Why did you come here then," said she, seeing that he was contented with looking at her.

"Yes," said Marguerite, who sought to resume her ordinary assurance, "for you must have come for something."

"And I have found more than I had believed possible," said the marquis, smiling. Then, without appearing to notice the embarrassment which his presence caused, he approached Blanche, took her hand, and cried, —

"You in this retreat! you hidden from all eyes! — when you should be the ornament of the world and receive the homage of the whole universe."

"Forgive me, monsieur," said Blanche, "but I don't understand you."

"I don't understand you either," murmured Marguerite, fixing her small eyes on the marquis.

"Better still, adorable girl," responded the marquis to Blanche, without paying the least attention to Marguerite. "They did not deceive me, this is innocence itself, the most perfect ingenuousness united to the most seductive grace and beauty."

"But, monsieur, was that what M. Touquet told you to say to me?"

"No, lovely child, not at all," said the marquis laughing, and still retaining Blanche's hand, which she vainly tried to disengage.

"It's necessary however that you should explain yourself," said Marguerite in a dry tone, "you have been here for a quarter of an hour and you have not yet said why you came. It is very late and we are accustomed to go to bed early."

"Oh, well, old woman, go to your bed; I will remain with this lovely child until the return of Master Touquet."

"Do you think I will leave you alone with my dear Blanche," cried Marguerite, rendered still more suspicious by the word old, "no, monsieur, no, I take better care of her than that. Your laces, your jewelry, and your fine appearance do not inspire me with much confidence. Wait! take back your pieces of gold, I don't wish them, for I begin to believe that your intentions are not good, and Marguerite will never second the plans of a seducer, whether duke or prince, even should he offer her the mines of Peru."

The marquis replied only by shrugging his shoulders without turning towards Marguerite, then he seated himself near Blanche and took off his hat and mantle, establishing himself in the room like one who is not disposed to go.

Blanche was trembling, confused; she looked at Marguerite as if to implore her not to abandon her, and the old woman, whom the conduct of the stranger had filled with new dread, forced herself to appear calm, saying in a voice whose faltering accents betrayed her fright, —

"Be easy, my child, I am here, I will not leave you, and while monsieur does not appear to listen to me it is, above all, necessary that he should tell us what he came here to do."

"I have told you, my good woman, I am wait-

ing for Touquet. I must speak to him this evening; that is very important."

"And just now you said that it was he who had sent you; you were deceiving us, then?"

"Perhaps," said the marquis, laughing.

"Very well, monsieur, if you are really waiting for my master, come into the lower room. I will give you a light, and you will find a fire there."

"No, indeed, my good woman, I like this much better than your lower room; the society of this charming child will make the time seem very short, and surely, adorable Blanche, you will not be cruel enough to refuse to keep me company."

"No, monsieur, if you desire it, if it will amuse you, I must wish it also."

"Yes," said Marguerite, "it seems that it is necessary that we should do monsieur's will, but patience — soon I hope — "

At this moment somebody violently shut the street door. Blanche started joyfully, and Marguerite cried, with a triumphant air, —

"Ah! here is my master! We shall now see whether anyone can establish himself here in spite of us."

The marquis rose without answering, took his mantle, put his hat on his head, kissed Blanche's hand, saying to her, —

"Au revoir, charming girl," then left the room saying to Marguerite, —

"Light me!"

All this had happened so quickly that Blanche, who was greatly astonished, had not time to oppose the action of the marquis, and the old servant followed the great nobleman, saying, —

"O mon Dieu, what a man!"

The barber had entered and was taking off his mantle, when the marquis, followed by Marguerite, appeared in the lower room. At the sight of Villebelle, Touquet started with surprise, saying, —

"What, you here, monseigneur!"

He paused and Marguerite cried, —

"Yes, my dear master, monseigneur has been here for three-quarters of an hour. He presented himself as coming from you, and he installed himself in Mademoiselle Blanche's room."

"In Blanche's room," said the barber, appearing violently agitated.

"Yes, monsieur, in mademoiselle's room —"

"That's enough, my good woman, leave us," said the marquis, in an imperious tone.

"Leave you," answered Marguerite, "oh, it is necessary before all —"

"It is necessary to obey," said the barber, in a gloomy voice. "Go!"

Marguerite was dumbfounded, but she dared not reply and left them, saying, —

"Well, I don't understand all this, this man does as he pleases here, it troubles me."

"Well, dear nurse," said Blanche to the old woman, "and what about the stranger?"

"Oh, I don't know who that man can be, but M. Touquet is as submissive as a child before him. I left them together. This fine gentleman said to me, 'Go!' and it was necessary to obey him."

"That's very surprising, dear nurse."

"How did you like that man?"

"Oh, he is not so bad, dear nurse, and if I had not been a little afraid of him, I believe I should have thought him very agreeable."

"Ah, mon Dieu, I was very much frightened; he has something satanic in his looks."

"Oh, dear nurse, you're mistaken, he has a very fine face, features which inspire respect, and which are bland at the same time."

"Fie! for shame! my child, to admire such an impertinent man. Oh, if your Urbain could hear you."

"But, dear nurse, I should say the same thing before Urbain. Is it not necessary to tell him all that I think? That could not displease him, for he knows how much I love him."

"Come, my child, it's late, go to bed. I am going, too, good-night."

Marguerite went up to her room, saying to herself,—

"Young girls will always be young girls. The most virtuous of them will allow themselves to be favorably impressed by fine compliments, a handsome face, and rich clothing. These are terrible talismans with the women."

When Marguerite had left the lower room, the barber shut the door. His manner disclosed a violent agitation; however, he awaited the marquis' explanation, and the latter narrowly watched and appeared to enjoy his uneasiness.

'May I know, monseigneur," said Touquet at last, "how it is that you are at my house when you appointed another meeting place?"

"What, Touquet, don't you understand it? I made a distant appointment with you in order that I might represent myself as sent by you to this young girl, whom you have hidden from me and whom I ardently desired to see. This is one of the little tricks which you yourself formerly taught me, and which are nearly always successful."

The barber bit his lips, but did not answer.

"Well, to be sure," resumed the marquis, "that you should possess such a treasure, an angel of beauty and grace, and hide her from me, your old master! From me, when you know my partiality for the sex which has led me to commit so many follies."

"It was precisely because of that partiality, monsieur le marquis, that I hoped to shield Blanche from your notice; I am interested in that young girl, to whom I stand in the place of her parents. I know the impetuosity of your passions, and I don't think the honor of being your mistress for a fortnight will assure the child's happiness."

"And how long, clown, have you made similar

reflections," said the marquis, looking witheringly at the barber. "After lending aid in all my intrigues, after leading me to commit actions which, but for you, I should never have thought of, should you allow yourself to control my morals and enact the knight errant of the beauties I deign to distinguish."

"Monseigneur!"

"Remember that though your hypocrisy and lies may serve you sometimes, they can never deceive me. It is not from me only that you hide this young girl, for you hold her a prisoner in her chamber and do not permit her to go out. It is not because you are in love with Blanche, since you are about to give her in marriage; besides, love is a feeling unknown to you; your heart knows nothing but a thirst for gold. There is in all this some mystery which I must discover."

Touquet became pale and trembling, and murmured, lowering his eyes, —

"I swear to you, monsieur le marquis —"

"Make an end of this," said Villebelle, interrupting him. "Listen to me. I love, what do I say, I adore this young girl whom I have seen only for a moment; for a very long time I have not experienced sensations similar to those I felt in her presence. This is not a passing caprice; these are not desires to which the heart is a stranger. No, on seeing Blanche I felt moved, uneasy, softened. I cannot define all that passed

within me. It seemed to me that I recognized that lovely child—that my love for her had existed for a long time. After that you must divine that it is impossible henceforth to live without her. Blanche must be mine; I am capable of every sacrifice in order to arrive at that end."

"Ah, monsieur, that is what I feared," said Touquet, who appeared to be really grieved at what he heard. "You wish to make Blanche your mistress!"

"I wish to make her happiness; I feel that my love for her will be lifelong."

"That is impossible, monseigneur. Blanche is about to be married to a young man whom she loves. You must see that your love cannot render her happy."

For some moments the marquis walked up and down the room, then he cried passionately,—

"I repeat to you, Blanche must be mine—it must be so. I will leave no means unemployed to attain this end. She cannot yet love her destined husband; she has only known him for a few days."

"Monseigneur, who has informed you as to all this?"

"What does that matter to you? That love is but a passing sentiment and I shall know how to make her forget it by overwhelming her with presents, with jewels, and by seeking to invent new pleasures to make each day delightful to her."

"Monseigneur, Blanche is accustomed to retirement; she is not a coquette; your ornaments, your gifts will have no effect upon her."

"Enough of this," said the marquis, "your objections weary me; I have now some orders to give you. I wish you to give me Blanche, on whom I swear to settle an independent fortune. Such a treasure I feel is worthy of a great price. Wait, here are six thousand crowns in notes and gold. You shall have as much more when you have fulfilled my commands."

The barber eyed with avaricious looks the money which the marquis had spread upon the table; then he turned his eyes away, saying in a gloomy voice,—

"Gold! yes, it is always that which draws me on; but this time—no, I cannot. Remember, monseigneur, that within two days Blanche should be united to her lover."

"Then at once, tonight even, it is necessary that she be given into my hands."

The barber appeared to be weighing the proposition in his mind; from time to time he looked at the money on the table, and, finally, speaking with a great effort, he said,—

"It cannot be, monseigneur, I am extremely grieved to have to disappoint you, but matters are too far advanced."

The marquis drew near Touquet, and grasping him tightly by the arm, said in a low tone,—

"It will, then, be necessary that I beg my uncle, the grand provost, to cause a new inquiry to be held in regard to the murder of Blanche's father. Do you think, scoundrel, that I do not partly divine the cause which has induced you to keep this young girl so carefully hidden from everybody's sight? Her beauty would be remarked, and could not fail to draw a throng of admirers who would have much to say of Blanche, and in seeking to learn who she is and what family she belongs to they would obtain new facts about that unfortunate traveller who was murdered on the evening of his arrival in Paris. They would make reflections on the fortune which came to you, nobody knows how, some time after that event."

"Monseigneur," said the barber, whose face had become livid, while a convulsive trembling seized his limbs; "monseigneur, what do you say? Could you believe it of me?"

"I believe nothing yet, but tomorrow I shall urge the magistrates to make an effort to pierce this mystery."

"Monseigneur, you shall have Blanche," said Touquet dropping into a chair as though he were perfectly helpless.

The marquis smiled triumphantly and seemed to forget all but his love. Touquet who had been thrown into a state of the deepest depression and consternation, remained for some minutes without daring to raise his eyes, and unable to resume his

ordinary expression. Finally, he rose and murmured, in a broken voice,—

"Believe me, monsieur le marquis, that it is not the suspicions you have conceived which determine me to obey you — my devotion alone — "

"Enough," said the marquis interrupting him; "not another word about that. I am quite willing to believe that appearances are deceitful. We will occupy ourselves only with my love. I don't wish to lose a single instant in obtaining possession of Blanche, and, since you tell me that in two days she was to have been married, it is necessary that she should leave this house tonight."

"I agree with you," said Touquet, "since she is to go the sooner the better. But how can it be done tonight?"

"I don't recognize you, Touquet; you see nothing but obstacles, as for me, I don't know of any. It is not yet midnight, we have some time remaining. I'll go to my hotel and send Germain, my valet de chambre, to get a carriage — and to go only as far as my little house."

"Monseigneur, you must not take Blanche there; she would not be safe; the place is too near Paris. Urbain Dorgeville, the person she was to marry, will make every effort to discover her. The young man adores her; he is enterprising; you have everything to fear from his despair."

"I fear nobody, and you know it. However, I

think your advice is wise. Blanche is so pretty; I already feel jealous of a glance given by her to another, and a good many giddy fellows know my little house. But wait, wait, I have just what will suit me; amongst all the property that came to me from my mother is a château situated in the neighborhood of Grandvilliers, about twenty-two leagues from here, and far enough from the town and the highway to avoid the notice of travellers."

"Very well, monsieur, that will suit perfectly."

"I have only once visited this château, which is called Sarcus, but although I only made a short stay there, I was greatly struck by the elegance of the beautiful estate. The château, built in 1522, was given to Mademoiselle de Sarcus by Francis the First, and in the neighborhood is noted for the marvellous beauty of its architecture, and especially of its façade, in which the artist excelled all his previous works. That is the place to which I shall take, or rather, to which I shall have Blanche taken. Twenty-eight leagues — two trusty men — she will be at the château in ten hours or so. As for myself, after tomorrow I shall arrange my affairs, and pretending at court that I am obliged to go to England, I shall repair secretly to Sarcus to her whom I never more wish to leave. You see, Touquet, my plan is perfect and no one will suspect that I have abducted the young orphan."

"Yes, monseigneur, no one among your brilliant acquaintances; but how shall we induce

Blanche to go with you quietly and prevent a noise and cries which will attract the attention of the neighbors?"

"Oh, hang it! it will be necessary to mislead her at first—that's your look out. Is your invention so sterile that you can think of nothing to deceive a mere child. You can make her believe that she is going to rejoin her future husband."

"Wait, monseigneur, I've thought of a way, but Blanche mustn't see you. She would suspect something, and my stratagem would fail."

"I repeat to you she will start alone—a postilion and two well-armed men behind the carriage will answer to me for her safety."

"That is all that is necessary."

"It is midnight. I'll go and settle everything. My valet de chambre shall start before at full speed, that he may give my orders at the château and that he may be there to receive our beautiful girl; at two o'clock in the morning I shall be at your door with a coach; you understand me, at two o'clock."

"Yes, monsieur le marquis," said the barber, "I will not forget the hour."

"Manage so as to have Blanche ready to get into the carriage. I leave it to you. Do not try to evade your promise or my vengeance will be terrible."

"You may rely on me, monseigneur."

The marquis wrapped himself in his mantle and

hastily left the barber's shop. Touquet remained alone for some time, thoughtful and depressed; at length he rose abruptly.

"What does it matter after all," said he, "whether Blanche be with Urbain or the marquis? Shall I be foolish enough to sympathize with the love of two children? In keeping this young girl with me I hoped to avoid all suspicion. But at last I shall be relieved of the burden that oppresses me. Come let's put up this gold; the marquis has promised me as much more — and I would have refused him. No. My destiny must be accomplished; this metal has always served as its compass. I was only sixteen years old when it caused me to commit actions which drew down upon me my father's curse; arrived in Paris, which I had yearned to know, I soon found myself robbed of everything I possessed by people who were more adroit than myself; I had been deceived and I wished to make others suffer as I had suffered. I gave scope to my talents. Up to that time I had done no great wrong — but this cursed thirst for gold. Ten years have passed and have not effaced from my memory that horrible night — when — since then I have not tasted a moment's peace. I will return to my birthplace and if my father is still alive I will try to obtain his pardon; perhaps then I may regain quiet of mind. But if he knew how I enriched myself."

The barber again gave himself to his reflections, Soon Saint-Eustache's clock struck one. Touquet slowly took the money from the table, and, after locking it in his room upstairs, he went to Blanche's chamber and knocked at the door.

The poor little girl was not asleep; she had been too greatly excited by the events of the evening. She still seemed to see the stranger seated near her, holding her hand and looking at her with an expression that she could not define. She felt oppressed; it seemed to her that she should never see Urbain more. The marquis' figure appeared constantly between herself and Urbain, and the sadness the latter had felt on leaving her heightened her own premonitions. Yielding to this indefinite anxiety, often harder to bear than a real sorrow, Blanche could not rest, and the sound of a knock at her door in the middle of the night awoke in her fresh terror.

"Who is there?" she cried, in a faltering voice.

"It is I, Blanche," answered the barber; "open the door. I have something of importance to tell you."

The young girl, who had recognized Touquet's voice, rose, hastily put on a dressing gown, and opened the door. The barber held the lamp in his hand and avoided looking at the young girl, who, on the contrary, wished to question him and said, —

"Mercy, my good friend, what has happened?"

These words, "my good friend," uttered in Blanche's sweet voice, always agitated Touquet; he forced himself to hide his feelings.

"Calm yourself, Blanche," he said, "and listen to me; Urbain has had a quarrel tonight — a duel."

"O heavens! He is wounded!"

"No, no, nothing has happened to him, but it was necessary to his safety that he should leave Paris immediately; had he not done so they would have arrested him; he therefore left for the country."

"He left without me?"

"Let me finish; you should have been married here, in place of which you will be married at his house; but to quiet Urbain's anxiety I had to promise that tonight you should rejoin him."

"Oh, at once, my friend, as soon as you please; but why did he not take me with him?"

"That was impossible; Urbain had not an instant to lose; by a lucky chance, one of my friends is sending his valet into the country to find a wife. The carriage will come to take you in an hour. Get ready, therefore. He will charge you nothing and you will find everything down there that you need — do you understand me?"

"Oh, I shall be ready in a moment, and what about Marguerite?"

"She can follow you later; I need her to make divers arrangements. In a few days I shall come

to see you. I'll leave you now; make your preparations. I shall come for you when the carriage arrives."

The barber departed, and Blanche, who had not the slightest suspicion that anyone would deceive her, continued her toilet.

"Poor Urbain," she said to herself, "I was sure that something would happen to him; and he, also, had a presentiment. How fortunate that he was able to escape; but I shall rejoin him and I shall nevermore leave him."

During this time Touquet had returned to his room, saying to himself, —

"Everything is going well — the little one will start without making the least difficulty. But if Marguerite is not asleep; if she should have heard some words of my conversation with the marquis and if she wishes to follow Blanche. It is important that the old woman should know nothing — it is easy to assure myself she is sleeping, since she now sleeps in the room occupied by Blanche's father. Come, I mustn't be weak. I'll go up."

The barber took his light, and directed his steps towards a closet which was at the end of his room. When he reached it he still hesitated; then, making an effort to command himself, he touched a button hidden by the hangings, and a small door opened and discovered a small and very narrow staircase which led to the floor above. Touquet turned his eyes, murmuring, —

"Since that fatal night I have not been in this passage."

He mounted the stairs, his wild eyes seeming to fear that they would meet some frightful object, the hand in which he held the lamp trembling, while with the other he held to the wall to steady his tottering steps.

At the top of the staircase was a door closed by two bolts, which he withdrew with as little noise as possible, and entered the little dark closet at the back of Marguerite's alcove, which the old nurse and Blanche had entered without perceiving the door on the staircase, because it was artistically hidden in the woodwork. The barber placed his lamp on the floor, and put his ear to the door which led into the alcove; he soon heard a prolonged snore, which announced that Marguerite was sleeping soundly; however, he softly opened the door so as to thoroughly assure himself of the fact; then he reëntered the little room and left by the secret door, drew the bolts and went down, saying, —

"There is nothing to fear from her."

Suddenly the barber made a false step, he lowered his lamp and perceived some reddish stains on the staircase. Although it was difficult to distinguish what had produced these stains, Touquet recoiled with horror, his hair stood up on his head, his feet refused to carry him over the steps on which were imprinted the marks which caused his

fear; in his agitation he allowed the lamp to fall from his hands; it rolled and was extinguished. The barber was left in the most profound darkness in the secret passage. Showing every sign of the most ungovernable terror, he ran as fast as possible down the stairs, bumping his head against the wall, falling and crawling on the stairs.

"Mercy! mercy!" he cried, in a suffocating voice, "do not pursue me. Is it because I am giving up your daughter that you come anew to torment me? Well, I won't give her to the marquis. No, but leave me. Don't touch me with your bloody hands."

At length he came to the foot of the stairs; he reclosed the door hidden by the hangings and without pausing in his room, where he had no light, he went down into the lower room, which was lit by one lamp and by the fire which still burned on the hearth.

He threw himself upon a seat, and looked wildly about him, gradually becoming more assured; finally, he passed his hand over his brow saying, —

"It was a dream."

At that moment he heard the sound of a carriage, which stopped in front of the house, and having entirely recovered his wits he went to open the street door.

"Here I am," said the marquis, alighting from the travelling carriage. "I have come even sooner

1565

than I promised. My valet de chambre is already on the way to Grandvilliers. The postilion is in the saddle, these two efficiently armed men will follow the coach, all is ready; and Blanche?"

"I will go and get her; she believes that she is going to rejoin her future husband who has been wounded tonight in a duel; she has not the slightest suspicion that there is any trickery, and goes of her own free will."

"That's excellent!"

"But hide yourself, monseigneur, that she may not perceive you, or all will be lost."

"Fear nothing; I will ensconce myself in the angle of this doorway — I only wish to see her enter the carriage — tomorrow I shall be at Sarcus, and I shall dry her tears."

"I will go and fetch her."

The barber went up to call Blanche, who had heard the carriage and was ready.

"I am here, my good friend," said she, hastily leaving her room, "I knew the carriage had come."

Touquet walked first, and Blanche followed; her heart was palpitating and, although she thought she was going to rejoin Urbain, this departure in the middle of the night had about it something mysterious, singular, which almost frightened her. When they had reached the lower room the sweet girl glanced around her, saying, —

"What! has not Marguerite come to bid me good-by and kiss me?"

"No, no, we haven't time for that," said Touquet taking her hand and leading her into the passage. When they reached the front door the barber put out his head to assure himself that the marquis was not within sight, then he opened the carriage door.

"Come quickly," said he to Blanche, "get in; don't lose any time."

Blanche darted into the street and stepped into the vehicle; her heart grew heavy as she found herself alone in it in the darkness of the night; but Touquet had already closed the door.

"Good-by, my dear friend," she said to him, "I am going to rejoin Urbain, but I shall never forget you. All you have done for me is graven on my heart by gratitude."

"Go on, go on, postilion," cried the barber, in a voice faltering with the emotions he experienced. At this moment two o'clock struck, the postilion cracked his whip, and the carriage which held Blanche started.

"She is mine!" cried the marquis, and the barber hastily reëntered his dwelling.

CHAPTER VI

The Rendezvous. Strokes of Fortune. The Hôtel de Bourgogne. The Sedan Chair

On taking his departure from the marquis' little house in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, at daybreak, the Chevalier Chaudoreille did not feel entirely reassured as to the outcome of his duel with Turlupin, whom he believed to be a great personage; and whom, incredible as it may seem, he firmly believed he had slain; however, the idea that he was now the confidential agent of one so powerful as the Marquis de Villebelle, which gave him the right to claim that nobleman's protection if it should be necessary to him, gave him the courage to return to Paris, where he summed up the events of the preceding night and their probable consequences. The marquis had promised him a hundred pistoles if Blanche should happen to please him, and Chaudoreille was confident that he should have that sum; but should Touquet discover that it was through him that the marquis had learned of Blanche's existence, he would have everything to fear from the barber's anger. However, he did not forget his rendezvous for the evening.

Forcing himself to banish all thoughts of the barber, and chinking the crowns which he had won from Marcel, he went into a wine shop, where he passed a great part of the day trying to obtain courage by emptying several bottles of wine. Towards evening he felt more enterprising, and returned to his lodging to iron out his ruff, renovate his complexion, dye his mustache and imperial, dust his shoes, and brush his hat; he then set out for his rendezvous, saying, —

"Though she should possess the grace of a princess, I must not forget that I have to return this evening to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, in order to receive a hundred pistoles from the marquis. Zounds! for a hundred pistoles I would leave the Sultan's favorite and all the odalisks of the Grand Turk."

The day was waning; for the last half hour Chaudoreille had been strolling in the neighborhood where the old woman had accosted him the evening before, looking up at all the windows, having first carefully assured himself that the water carrier was not to be seen. Finally, the servant who had spoken to him previously issued from a respectable-looking house, and, as she passed near him, said in a whisper, —

"Follow me, but do not appear to be with me."

"Very well, Marton," answered Chaudoreille; and he followed on the heels of the old woman, so as not to lose her from sight.

They entered the house; the servant mounted the stairs, put her finger on her lips and signed to Chaudoreille to follow her. The chevalier did so, but all of a sudden he seized the old woman's petticoat and stopped her, saying, —

"Is your mistress married?"

"Why?" asked the old woman, looking at him mockingly.

"Why! by jingo! because some husbands have very little patience in an affair of this kind. Hang it! a stroke of the sword is soon given, and I can't throw myself thus into the wolf's den."

"Are you not armed, monsieur? and if anyone should attack you, can you not defend yourself?"

"Yes, I know how to defend myself," said Chaudoreille, going down some stairs, "but I have an infinite respect for the marriage vow, and, taking everything into consideration, I should prefer to take myself off."

"Come I tell you, monsieur," said the domestic running after him, "my mistress is not married, and you have nothing to fear."

"Well, by jingo! You should explain yourself, my good woman. My life is too precious for me to expose it with temerity. Come, Lisette, go up! I will follow you, but if you have lied to me, tremble!"

The old woman paused on the second landing; she opened a door and took Chaudoreille into a

pretty dining-room and from thence into a small well-furnished parlor, where she left him, saying, —

"Wait here, I will go and tell madame."

"Do not be long, for I am not fond of waiting," cried he, looking around him anxiously.

Left alone he examined the apartment curiously, saying, —

"It is pretty enough, it is all in very good taste; this is a woman of distinction. Come, Chaudoreille, you're in great luck. Don't act like a novice, but show some self-possession. Everything has come to me at once; fortune — money — love — I am sure that I shall finish by making my way. Oh, the deuce! here's a hole in my doublet! But I must pull my hat up in front, it will hinder me from seeing my princess; I feel in advance that I can adore her. But it's dark and they have left me without a light, that's very singular. My heart beats, this is certainly love."

Here Chaudoreille raised his voice, saying, —

"Besides, if anyone should dare to rub against me, Rolande has an edge and four men could not frighten me."

At this moment the door creaked and opened behind Chaudoreille, who started back against a table, overturning several porcelain cups, as he exclaimed, —

"Who goes there?"

"It's me, monsieur," answered the servant. "I came to conduct you to madame."

"Oh! that's right; but you left me without a light and I mistook you for a rat, of which I have a great horror. I would much rather fight with a lion than see only the tail of one of these little animals, but show me the way, my good woman."

The servant led him through another room and opened a door into a handsome boudoir lighted by many candles; a young woman was seated on a sofa at the end of the room. The old woman retired. Chaudoreille, very uneasy in this tête-à-tête, to which he had looked forward, dared not look at the person with whom he found himself, and racked his imagination to find a compliment suitable for the occasion; but his Phœbus was stubborn, and nothing had occurred to him when he heard these words, —

"Will not Monsieur Chaudoreille speak to his old acquaintances?"

Struck by the voice, the little man raised his eyes and uttered an exclamation of surprise on recognizing Julia, the young Italian, who looked smilingly at him.

"Can it be? Is it indeed you whom I see?" said Chaudoreille.

"And what do you find so extraordinary in that, monsieur le chevalier? Did you think that the marquis would always leave me in his little house?"

"No — undoubtedly not, beautiful lady — I do not know — but I was so far from expecting to see you," and he glanced tenderly at her, saying to himself: "I always thought that she loved me, behold me now the rival of a marquis; it's a tremendously ticklish position."

"Be seated, Monsieur Chaudoreille," said Julia, who appeared for some moments very much amused by the embarrassment and the oglings of the little man. The latter, however, resumed his audacity, and was about to seat himself on the sofa beside Julia, but, by a gesture, the young woman indicated to him a folding chair, and signed to him to seat himself opposite her.

"She's afraid of me," said Chaudoreille, seating himself on the folding chair, "she felt that she could not resist me and wished to defer her defeat. There's no need to hurry matters, my eyes can accomplish the business for me."

"Can you imagine why I sent for you?" said the young woman, looking at him mischievously.

"But beautiful lady — I flatter myself, I presume there are some things that one divines when one lives in society."

"And I think that you are mistaken," said Julia, assuming a serious tone, "and I will explain myself."

"Mon Dieu," said Chaudoreille to himself, dismayed by Julia's change of tone, "Is she going to kill herself on account of me?"

"I am the marquis' mistress; you are not ignorant of that fact."

"Undoubtedly not, since I myself was the messenger of—"

"Silence! do not interrupt me! If I do not seek to hide my frailty it is because, far from having yielded to interest or ambition, love only has caused my fall, and, in the eyes of a woman, love excuses many faults. Yes, I have loved the marquis for a long time. I had often seen him on the promenades, and in spite of all that I heard said about him, I could not resist the feeling which he inspired. My heart yielded itself to him. Be not astonished that I yielded so readily to your proposition. I flattered myself that the marquis shared the devouring flame which consumed me. I hoped to have enough strength not to show my love until I was certain of his. Alas! I counted too much on myself and it was very easy for him to persuade me that he loved me. Ungrateful man! the love which he swore to me has already given place to indifference, and I!—I feel that I love him more than ever."

In speaking of the marquis, Julia became animated; her glance was fiery and her whole person indicated the violent passion to which she was a prey; Chaudoreille, much surprised at what he had heard, and almost alarmed at Julia's fate, drew his stool farther away as she grew warmer.

"Yes," said the young woman who had appar-

ently forgotten that Chaudoreille was there, and gave way to all her feelings; "yes, I shall always love you, fascinating Villebelle — this burning heart beats but for you! But I cannot bear your indifference; and if you should love another then my fury would know no bounds, and in your blood and that of my rival, I would revenge my outrage."

"O my God! she wants me to stab the marquis," said Chaudoreille, and he tried to draw his chair still farther away, but, as it was now up against the wall, it was impossible for him to go any further, and he could only glance towards the door from the corner of his eye, murmuring, —

"This is a fine rendezvous! That woman's possessed of the devil. I like my portress much better."

Julia had ceased speaking, little by little she became calmer and resumed her ordinary manner, and, glancing at Chaudoreille, she could not prevent a smile on seeing him glued against the tapestry.

"Come nearer! come nearer," she said to him, "that I may tell you what I desire of you. You are, you have told me, very intimate with the barber Touquet?"

"Yes — mada — mademois — signora."

"The barber is a man who habitually serves the marquis in his gallant intrigues; and I think that through him it would be very easy for you to

learn if Villebelle has any new conquest in sight. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, yes; I understand you perfectly."

"Are you willing to serve me?—to inform me of all you can learn from the barber in regard to the marquis? and if you yourself should be employed in some love intrigues to come and impart to me immediately the plans which they have formed."

"Yes, certainly. I consent with all my heart. Zounds!" added he to himself, "if she knew what I said to her lover yesterday, I shouldn't get out of here alive."

"What are you trembling for?"

"Oh, it's nothing, it's my nerves; that happens to me often."

"Wait, take this purse; if you serve me zealously and faithfully, you will see that Julia is grateful."

The sight of a well-filled purse somewhat restored Chaudoreille's resolution. He took the money, bowing nearly to the floor, and cried,—

"From this moment, I am entirely devoted to you; dispose of my arm, of my sword, of—"

"It is neither a question of your arm nor of your sword, it is of your eyes and your ears only that I have need. Be on the watch, make the barber talk, inform yourself of the slightest actions of the marquis, and come and give me an account of them. Let nobody have the least suspicion of

you and that is all that is necessary to us. Go! and remember to inform me of the slightest circumstance if it has any connection with my love."

"You shall be obeyed," responded Chaudoreille, bowing humbly. Julia rang, the old woman arrived, and, at her mistress' signal, led the chevalier to the door without saying a word.

Once in the street, Chaudoreille breathed more freely.

"Zounds!" said he, "here I am in intrigues up to my neck; Julia's agent, confidential man of the marquis, confidant of the barber, and, what is even more satisfactory, receiving money from all three of them. That's doing pretty well. Hang it! this purse is well-filled. Tomorrow I will clothe myself entirely anew. I shall get some flesh-colored breeches that will make me look like an angel! But I mustn't forget the most interesting item — the hundred pistoles that the marquis is to give me if Blanche pleases him — and I must go to the little house. O Fortune! you are treating me like a spoilt child, but it must be confessed that your favors are directed to a very adroit fellow."

While making these reflections, Chaudoreille had taken his course toward the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, arriving at the little house at eight o'clock in the evening. He rang nearly as loudly as the marquis, and Marcel on opening the door to him said, —

"You make as much noise as monseigneur."

"Apparently it is because I have a right to do so," responded the Gascon, entering with an impertinent manner; then, striding across the garden, he went immediately into the dining-room and threw himself on a seat, saying, —

"Has my friend, the marquis, been here since yesterday?"

"Your friend, the marquis," answered Marcel, opening his eyes wide.

"Why, yes, caitiff! Or the marquis, my friend, if that pleases you better."

"Nobody has been here."

"And has he sent nothing for me?"

"Nothing."

"I must wait for him then. Serve supper quickly for me, all that you have of the best, some of your oldest wines, some liqueur. Come! go about it, in place of standing and looking at me like a statue."

"But what the devil is the matter with you?"

"Marcel, no reflections, I beg of you, and, if you wish to keep your place, render yourself worthy of my protection."

Marcel contented himself with smiling, then he laid the table and served the supper. Chaudoreille placed himself at table, Marcel did likewise.

"Your conduct is a little familiar," said the chevalier to him; "but, as we are alone, I may as well allow you to seat yourself near me—"

"That's very fortunate."

"On condition that you serve me first, always."

During supper, Chaudoreille chinked his money, counted his crowns, calculated what remained to him, and what he expected to receive. Marcel looked at him with surprise, saying, —

"Have you inherited some money?"

"Yes, I inherit like that very often. Zounds! if the marquis keeps his word with me, I shall be able to keep the pace."

The supper lasted long; Chaudoreille was so much preoccupied by his affairs that he did not dream of playing; however, midnight had struck, he had received no message from the marquis, and the chevalier's hopes began to vanish. He sighed, listened and exclaimed, —

"He doesn't come! If he should not have found her charming that would be very difficult for me. Zounds! in place of a hundred pistoles I should receive a hundred blows of a stick."

As his hope diminished, his impertinence became tempered and he clinked his glass against Marcel's, saying, —

"To your health my dear and true friend, for you are my friend. Don't talk to me about noblemen of the court, no one can put any faith in them; my good Marcel, what a good cook he is and what a pleasure it is to me to drink with him."

"You don't think now that I did so ill in seating myself at the table?"

"What! was I so unlucky as to say that to you?"

"Certainly."

"Me,—could I have said such a stupid thing?"

"Yes, there is no doubt of it."

"I was tipsy then, I'd lost my senses."

"I don't know what you had lost, but you said it."

"Listen, Marcel! when I say such things as that to you, I give you permission to curse me."

"That's all right, we'll speak no more of it."

At that moment the bell of the gate was heard. Chaudoreille uttered an exclamation, half rose, and dropped on his chair again.

"That will be monseigneur," said Marcel, taking a light, and he ran to open the door, leaving his guest divided between fear and hope.

Marcel soon returned; he was alone, but he held a small roll which he placed on the table before Chaudoreille, and presented him with a paper on which somebody had written two lines in pencil, saying,—

"Here is what monseigneur has sent you; read it!"

Chaudoreille could not believe his eyes, he looked in turn at the roll, at the paper, and at Marcel.

"Why don't you read it," said the latter to him.

Finally, he took the paper with a trembling hand, and read: "I have seen her; you have

surpassed my hopes and I double the promised recompense."

"O my God, Marcel! he's doubled the hundred pistoles."

"Then that makes two hundred; that is to say, that there is, in that roll, two thousand livres tournois in gold."

"Two thousand livres!"

"Well, what's the matter with you now?"

"Marcel, give me a little vinegar, I beg of you. I don't feel very well."

"It seems to me that a present like that should make you feel very well. Wait, drink a drop of brandy, that will put you in good shape."

Chaudoreille, a little restored by the liquor, opened the roll, and the sight of the pieces of gold which it held deprived him for some moments of the faculty of speech. Finally, he murmured, in a voice faint with emotion,—

"Marcel, all this belongs to me."

"I know it, all right."

"And then, there's this purse still; and these six crowns which I had left—"

"Yes, from the game of piquet, yesterday."

"And I am rich! Oh, it produces a terrible effect, my poor fellow, to pass all of a sudden from poverty to opulence. Alas! I shall suffocate!"

"Drink a little more. My faith! if good fortune produces such an effect, I'd rather remain without a sou and breathe freely."

"O Marcel, you're very stupid, my boy!"

"I don't know at this moment which is the stupider of us two."

"Two thousand livres! Who would believe that one could thus hold his fortune in the palm of his hand."

"Hang it! one should hold it there as long as he can."

"Marcel, do you know of any property for sale in the neighborhood?"

"No, why do you ask that?"

"It's very necessary that I should place my funds. What the deuce shall I do with all this! Come! after tomorrow, I shall set up my house, but first I shall leave my lodging in the Rue Brise-Miche and I shall take one near the cardinal's palace; I shall need a jockey. Marcel, will you be my jockey? No, in fact, you are too big. Ah, if it were not so late, I should visit some of the gambling houses; but I can't expose myself at night in this neighborhood with so much gold on me. What a figure I can cut in the gambling dens and at faro. I shall place first a louis on the card, I shall win, I shall double my stakes, I shall still win. I shan't take it up, I shall win ten times following, and I shall carry away a heap of gold. How can I spend all that. Oh, what an excellent idea! I can dine and sup twice every day, that will indemnify me for the times that I have had to fast.

Marcel, whom fortune had not overwhelmed with her favors, went to sleep while Chaudoreille made his plans and counted his pieces of gold, but day dawned without the latter having closed his eyes, for, at the least sound, he started and carried his hand to his treasure, which he had rolled in his belt.

Chaudoreille awoke Marcel and ordered him to go and find a sedan chair; but Marcel would not leave the house, under the pretence that he must obey the marquis' orders. Chaudoreille became very insolent again and shouted and threatened, but seeing that nothing would move Marcel, he took leave, and decided to return on foot to Paris.

The little man felt larger by six inches since he had so much gold in his possession. He hardly looked at the passers-by, his nose seemed to threaten the heavens, and he was astonished that the sentinel on guard at the barrier did not present arms to him.

After breakfasting as copiously as possible he walked to the palace which Richelieu had built, and on which he had lavished all that the luxury and taste of the time afforded to please the eye and to leave to posterity a monument worthy of the one who had erected it.

Chaudoreille went into several shops, but he found nothing fine enough or fresh enough or brilliant enough for him. He ordered a doublet of rose-colored velvet slashed with white satin;

breeches of a similar color; a cherry-colored mantle embroidered with silver and a fringed belt with golden tassels. These articles would take the larger part of his fortune; but as he was certain of breaking the bank at faro, he refused himself nothing, and within two days hoped to be arrayed like the most elegant nobleman of the court.

Having ordered his costume, he went into one of the inns in the city, where he was served with a rich dinner and exquisite wines; and having already perceived that it was not so easy as he had believed to dine twice a day, which would be a very great resource for rich people who do not know what to do with their time, he tried to make his repast last twice as long as usual.

At five o'clock in the evening, he finally got up from the table; his face flushed, his eyes brilliant, his legs a little unsteady, and left the inn. It was still too early to go to the gambling house, where the high players do not put in an appearance until towards nine o'clock, and to pass his time until then Chaudoreille decided to go to the play, which he had not visited for a long time. He therefore took his way towards the Hôtel de Bourgogne, which he preferred to the Théâtre des Italiens, because Turlupin, Gros-Guillaume and Gautier-Garguille, famous for the farces which they had played in their little Théâtre de l'Estrapade had obtained permission from Richelieu to play there.

The theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne was situated in the Rue Mauconseil; the entrance was very narrow and the corridors very incommodious; the body of the house was composed of a pit and several tiers of boxes. When the court attended the theatre the courtiers carried their seats with them. Here were represented, following the privilege granted to comedians in January, 1613, all mysteries, and decent and amusing plays; presently, comedies, rather more elevated in tone than the usual buffooneries, were played there; and also some plays in which mythological divinities figured as characters, the poets of the day mingling the sacred and profane; but the low jokes and puns were what captivated and attracted the public.

Chaudoreille entered the house and slipped into the pit, where everyone was standing, and where the fluctuations of the crowd often carried one from one corner to another. The chevalier found himself behind a very tall man and could not see the stage. In vain he drew himself up and stood on his tiptoes; he could see nothing except the backs and the wigs of his neighbors. He tried to protest, but everybody hushed him, for Gautier-Garguille appeared and was about to speak the prologue which preceded the piece. Listen to the buffoon, that you may have an idea of the style of prologue in use under Louis the Thirteenth.

"Gentlemen and ladies, one thing I ought to say to you, and that is not to incline your ears to the symphony of this pastime as manual operators who do not coöperate with the nonsense; and do not treat it as a deluding music or voice, rather for the spoliation and express capture of your purses than to win praise from your ears; the field of my invention being so sterile that if it is not watered by the cordial of your kindness it is difficult for it to produce flowers worthy to be offered to you. Philippot will appear immediately, and he hopes, under the assurance of your indulgence, to make you laugh and cry both together, so that finally the moderation of one feeling shall temper the violence of the other. Gentlemen and ladies, I shall desire, I shall wish, I shall will, I shall demand, and I shall require, desideratively, wishfully, willingly, demandatively, and requireatively, with my desiderations and my requireations, etc., to thank you for your kind presence and attention to a little jovial and jolly farce which we are about to represent, before which I wish to make a large, small, wide, narrow, and spacious remonstrance, which will make you laugh."

While Gautier-Garguille was delivering this bombastic nonsense, Chaudoreille was being tortured, pressed, pushed on all sides, and struck in the face by his neighbors' elbows; in addition to which he suffered much anxiety in regard to the

safety of his purse. The little man had urgently begged them to let him go out, but nobody would listen to him. In his despair, and having immediate need of a little air, he adopted the plan of pulling the wigs of two of his neighbors to hoist himself to their height, but the wigs came off, and the heads of two respectable tradesmen of Paris appeared naked before the assembly. The two spectators who felt their wigs pulled off, cried, —

"Thief! watch!" and Chaudoreille mingled his voice with theirs, crying, "Help." The play was interrupted and at last, Chaudoreille was discovered struggling among the legs of the spectators, and rolling on the floor of the pit with the two wigs, which he had not dropped.

The two bald heads treated him as a thief; he returned the wigs and explained his conduct as well as he could; they put him out of the door of the pit, which was all that he wished. He mounted to the boxes and found a place in front and, from time to time, glanced angrily at the public.

However, the piece was commencing. Turlupin and Gros-Guillaume were on the stage and Chaudoreille rubbed his eyes, saying, —

"Why! by jingo! if I had not killed him, I should believe that that was the Prince of Cochin-China."

Presently Gautier-Garguille reappeared; he had counterfeited the Gascon to a marvel, his costume was exactly the same as that of Chaudoreille and

he had copied his manners and grimaces so well that the latter cried, —

"Is it another self, I see? — can I have a double?"

The comedian having seen his model in the box, saluted him and made faces at him; the spectators' eyes were turned on Chaudoreille, they recognized in the little man that they had chased from the pit the one whom Gautier-Garguille had copied, and the shouts of laughter redoubled. The chevalier perceived that they were mocking at him and was furious; he drew his sword and threatened the pit, because when one defies everybody together it is as if one defied nobody. The spectators laughed louder still, and Chaudoreille left his box, swearing that he would never again go to the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

Arrived in the street, where some persons had followed him, he again gave way to his anger, exclaiming that he would punish the buffoon who had dared to copy him, that nobody could mock with impunity at a man like him, and that he would spend, if necessary, a hundred pistoles to avenge himself.

While speaking thus, he drew out his purse, chinked his gold, took it out and put it back in his pockets, and finally exclaimed, —

"Who will go and bring me a sedan chair!"

Two men immediately went to execute this commission. While waiting for them to return,

Chaudoreille promenaded before the theatre, swinging himself in the manner which he judged the most noble, and striking his belt every minute to make his gold pieces chink.

The two men returned presently, they had obtained a chair, and would themselves have the honor of carrying Chaudoreille, or so they said to him on their arrival, exclaiming, —

"Here, master! get in, master, you'll be pleased with us."

Chaudoreille, whom nobody had ever called master, felt much pleased, and was about to bow low to the porters, but he restrained himself and darted into the chair, quivering with delight on the cushion which was at the bottom.

"Where shall we go, master?" said one of them.

"To Rue Bertrand-qui-Dort. You will see a lantern at the door of the house where I stop."

"All right, master!"

They closed the door of the chair, and Chaudoreille felt himself raised, and gently carried through the streets of Paris. It was the first time he had been in a chair. The pleasure which he experienced in being carried made him forget the disagreeable scene of the play. He reflected on his dazzling situation, and on the pleasure which he should taste in playing high, and laid new plans. However it seemed to him that he had been a long time in the chair, and the porters were still

walking. Chaudoreille wished to know if he were near his destination. There was a very narrow little window on each side of the seat, but these windows could not be lowered. It was late, one could not see clearly in the streets, and Chaudoreille could distinguish nothing.

"Are we almost there," cried he, leaning towards the front; nobody answered, and they continued to carry him. He began to think the motion of his carriage not quite so pleasant, he tried to open the door in front, the only vent by which one could leave a sedan chair, but that door would not open from the inside.

A cold sweat bathed the little man's brow. He conceived a thousand suspicions, recalled divers adventures in which sedan chairs figured, and was bitterly repenting having taken one when at last he felt that they had stopped. He breathed more freely and prepared to descend, but after being deposited on the ground the chair was stood up on end, in such a manner that when they opened the door it was above Chaudoreille's head.

"How do you think I can get out like that?" cried he, trying to climb.

"Before coming out there is a little ceremony to be observed, master," said the porters, in a jeering tone.

"A ceremony, what is it, my boys?"

"It is to give us all the silver and gold that you have about you. We'll relieve you of that."

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He fell back in the bottom of the chair.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ALBERT DE FORD PITNEY.

"What is that you say? Scoundrels! Rascals!"

"Come, do as we bid you and no noise, or that will be worse for you."

As they gave this order, they flashed the blades of their swords before Chaudoreille's eyes, and he fell back in the bottom of the chair, unable to support himself. The two porters were obliged to draw him from the chair themselves. He glanced around him, but he was in a lonely, narrow road, surrounded by marshes, where nobody would venture so late. The robbers searched him, and despoiled him of all that he possessed, then they escaped with their sedan chair, leaving him lying beside a huge stone, half dead with fright.

CHAPTER VII

Poor Urbain

The morning after Blanche's hurried and unexpected departure, old Marguerite left her room at her usual time. The good woman had heard nothing; she had slept soundly, for it was long since the pleasures and the pains of love had caused her to suffer from insomnia. Her first movement on arising was to go to her dear Blanche's room to kiss her, as she was in the habit of doing every morning. She found the door of the room half open; but Blanche was not there, and the extreme disorder of the apartment, the bed which had been slept in but had not been made, the clothing spread upon the furniture, all indicated that some extraordinary event had taken place. The young girl had never left her room without Marguerite, and the latter called Blanche, and receiving no answer and alarmed at this departure from her customary habits, and perhaps by a secret presentiment, went downstairs to see if the young girl was with her master, but the barber was alone in the lower room, and then Marguerite said, in a frightened tone,—

"O my God! where can the dear child be?"

"What is the matter, Marguerite," said Touquet, who was prepared for this scene.

"Blanche, monsieur, Blanche is not in her room. I have sought her vainly for a long time; someone has taken the dear child away from us."

"Taken her away!" exclaimed the barber, pretending to be struck with astonishment. He immediately went to Blanche's room, followed by the old servant, who went as quickly as her legs would permit. After a search, which Touquet knew would be fruitless, he threw himself on a seat, crying,—

"The wretch has fulfilled his threats!"

"Who do you mean, monsieur!"

"That man you saw here yesterday evening."

"I believe you're right, monsieur, it can be nobody except him."

"He was fascinated with Blanche, he ventured to ask her hand of me. I refused it to him and this is how he has revenged himself."

"But, monsieur, you must know where this man lives. He had the bearing of a great nobleman. You can recover our dear child."

"I have very little hope of it. This wretch assumed a brilliant costume in the hope of seducing Blanche, but he is a schemer without name, without a roof, without position."

"A schemer," said Marguerite, looking at her master in astonishment; "but, monsieur, it seemed to me that he was the same friend that you were waiting for so late some time ago."

The barber was for an instant rendered uneasy by Marguerite's remark, but soon recovering himself, he resumed, —

"You are mistaken, it was not he; I forbid you to speak to anybody of that again."

"And Urbain, monsieur, — that poor Urbain — when he comes here this evening — "

"Urbain will unite his efforts with mine to recover her whom he was about to marry."

The barber went out and Marguerite then gave free course to her tears. The good woman loved Blanche with a mother's tenderness. She could not bear to be deprived of her presence, and impatiently awaited Urbain's arrival; for it seemed to her that he would know better than anybody else how to discover and restore her lost darling.

Touquet was absent during a large part of the day. On his return, Marguerite inquired as to the success of his search, but he answered her coldly, —

"I have no hope of finding her." These words chilled the poor old woman's heart; she could not understand how anyone could be consoled at the loss of Blanche.

The hour drew near when Urbain could recompense himself for the day's absence.

"Only one day more," said he, as he approached the barber's house, "and she will be mine." He hurried, his heart palpitating with love, but on looking up at Blanche's window he

saw no light, and this slight circumstance astonished him and rendered him uneasy; or rather a secret presentiment warned him of his misfortune, for, in love, presentiments are not chimeras.

Urbain knocked and Marguerite appeared, but the grief depicted on her face, her eyes filled with tears, announced that something had happened.

"Where is Blanche?" cried Urbain, looking fearfully at Marguerite.

The old woman could only sigh deeply, but Urbain was no longer near her, he ran, he flew to the room of his beloved, but that room was deserted, its charming occupant was gone. Marguerite slowly followed the young man.

"In mercy tell me," cried Urbain, "where is she? Hide nothing from me."

"My poor boy, collect all your courage. Last night somebody carried off our dear child."

Urbain remained motionless and overwhelmed, while Marguerite told him all that she knew. He listened without interrupting her, and seemed as if he could hardly yet realize his misfortune, but presently, dropping on Blanche's favorite seat, he yielded to the profoundest despair. The tears rolled down his face; at nineteen years of age one sheds them still in the troubles of life; one has not then that strength of mind which is later acquired in the school of misfortune.

Marguerite tried to calm Urbain by saying to him,—

"You will recover her, that dear child, for you are not capable of forgetting her, and coldly consoling yourself for her loss."

"I forget her?" said Urbain, pressing the hands of the good old woman. "Ah, Marguerite, is not my life bound up in that of Blanche? I shall take no rest until she is with me again."

"That's right, my dear Urbain, to hear you speak thus renders me hopeful; besides, our poor little one has with her a talisman, and that lightens my anxiety a little."

"Tell me all the circumstances again; a man came here, you say?"

"Yes, he said he was sent by my master, and came to speak to Blanche."

"The scoundrel! and what did he say to her?"

"Oh, he merely paid her some compliments. He spoke like a great nobleman, and he had the costume and bearing of one, although M. Touquet pretends that he is a wretch without position and without home."

"He knows him, then?"

"There's no doubt of it. I confess to you that I am afraid, although he did not have a wicked appearance, rather a look of pride, and an imperious tone. I was sorry at having opened the door for him, and Blanche, the poor little thing, trembled. But all this didn't last very long. He heard M. Touquet come in, and immediately the stranger took his mantle, saluted

Blanche, and went down to monsieur. I followed him, but they sent me away, and I know nothing further."

Urbain left Marguerite, he darted from the chamber and, in an instant, he faced the barber, whose cold and gloomy look contrasted with Urbain's excitement.

"Well, monsieur, what have you learned? what have you done to recover my bride," cried he. "Speak! what do you know?"

The barber, rendered rather uneasy by the vivacity of Urbain's questions, answered hesitatingly, —

"I have made a thousand inquiries, I can discover nothing."

"And this scoundrel who came here yesterday, who is he?"

"I hardly know him. He sometimes came into my shop, for what purpose I do not know, and I swear to you that he must have heard of Blanche's beauty, for he had never seen her, and formed the idea of introducing himself to her."

The barber appeared so sincere in pronouncing these words that Urbain repented of having suspected him.

"Forgive me," said he, "for daring to think — but you would not make us unhappy. You have given me Blanche, you have been to her as a father. Oh, you will join with me, will you not, in endeavoring to find her ravishers?"

"Yes," answered Touquet in a low tone, "I shall second you, I promise you."

"And the name of that man, you must know it?"

"I never dreamt of asking him his name. Yesterday, on my showing him immediately that his love for Blanche was a folly, he retired, making many threats to which I paid little attention."

"Who could have given him the information which led him to wish to see her? and how could he get into Blanche's room?"

"A few false keys would be sufficient for that, and in this city, you know, nobody is safe in his own house."

Urbain remained silent for some moments and the barber avoided his looks; finally the bachelor exclaimed,—

"Good-by, monsieur, I am going to seek for her whom you gave me to be my bride."

"May you be successful," answered the barber in a gloomy voice, as Urbain abruptly departed, thinking of nothing but Blanche, but not knowing where to direct his steps.

Urbain went first to the different gates of Paris; there he demanded if during the previous night anyone had seen a young woman pass, and gave a description of her. He was sure that everybody would notice Blanche, and that her charming features would fix themselves upon the memory; but he did not obtain the slightest in-

formation, they hardly answered him. His simple costume prevented their putting themselves out to oblige him, for in the good old times, as well as today, it was necessary to scatter gold in order to expedite any business.

"If all these people could know Blanche," said Urbain, "they would not show so much indifference."

Not daring to leave Paris without having some indication as to the way that he should take, Urbain continued to walk as chance led him in the capital, though the inhabitants had for some time retired to rest. Thieves, lovers, and soldiers of the watch, alone showed themselves in the gloomy streets of Paris. The young bachelor traversed many streets without meeting anybody, but he still walked on, saying,—

"Why should I go in, I could not sleep, and what could I do with myself at home?"

However, love and despair do not render one indefatigable. Urbain had been walking since eight o'clock in the evening, and it was now nearly three o'clock in the morning. His legs began to fail him, he felt that it would soon be impossible for him to go any further. He looked around him. The moon, which showed at intervals, allowed him to distinguish the junction of some lonely cross roads into which converged some lanes which led to the marshes. Urbain turned towards a large stone which he perceived some

steps from him, for he thought he would there seat himself and wait for day, but as he reached the stone his feet struck against something which he had not perceived, and a voice immediately exclaimed, —

"Oh, by jingo! don't kill me; I haven't a sou now."

CHAPTER VIII

The Château de Sarcus

The carriage which contained the unfortunate Blanche bowled steadily along for several hours, and in the excitement occasioned by this novel journey, the lovely child hardly remembered her former fears. After living in the most absolute retirement, shut up for years in a single room except at meal times, it seemed like a dream to find herself in a carriage in the middle of the night, and alone journeying into the wide world, she knew not whither. However, the noise of the wheels and of the horses' feet, mingled with the cracking of the postilion's whip, as he sought to increase the speed of his horses, which were already going like the wind, and the rocking of the vehicle as it swayed from side to side alarmed her very much and persuaded her of the reality of her situation.

"I am going to see Urbain," said the trembling traveller to herself, "I am going to rejoin him; I should not give way to my fears, we are going to be so happy. Why, since we are about to be united forever, should I feel anything but pleasure at hastening the moment? But then, I

had hoped to travel with Urbain and everything has turned out so differently. Poor Urbain, it's not his fault; but why did he fight? Oh, I am so anxious to be with him!—and Marguerite didn't even say good-by to me. It seems as though everybody had abandoned me."

The sweet girl dried the tears which had moistened her eyes, then she looked out of the windows, but the darkness prevented her from seeing anything; she sighed and sank back in the carriage.

"Where are we? I don't know, but it seems to me they are going very fast. Well, so much the better, I shall be the sooner with Urbain."

As soon as day began to break, Blanche, who kept looking out of the windows, could partly distinguish trees, fields, and houses. Presently the mist was entirely dissipated, and the young traveller admired the glory of the dawn, and the varied scenes which seemed to fly before her. Soon the carriage rolled along a road bordered only by trees and hedges; the branches of some old trees from time to time brushed the top of the carriage, and this unexpected sound made the inexperienced traveller tremble. All of a sudden the view extended widely; the road was edged with meadows and rich fields. The laborers were already going to their work; already the furrows made by the plough could be seen, and the spade had newly broken the sweet-smelling earth. The

trees were still bare of foliage, but the tips of the branches were reddened and about to break into bud. Everything announced the return of spring. Farther on they passed through a village, the early rising inhabitants of which could be seen at their doors or their windows, hastening to watch the carriage passing so rapidly. Contentment and health were pictured on the face of each peasant; it was their only ornament, for cleanliness and neatness are not distinguishing traits of the country people, whose children play on the manure heap, pell-mell with the ducks and geese. But nature is not always pleasing, and it is not in the outskirts of Paris that one must seek for the shepherds of Florian, the herdsmen of Bertin, the seductive villagers of our comic operas.

Country scenes always please the pure and simple mind, and Blanche, as she passed the villages and farms, and hamlets, exclaimed,—

"How delightful to live here, to walk, to run in the fields and in the woods! Oh, how happy I shall be with Urbain!"

Indeed, the fields and the woods bore a more smiling aspect than the Rue des Bourdonnais, and the barber's gloomy house.

The carriage did not stop; the postilions had orders to speed straight to the château, though the horses should die at the journey's end. Blanche did not know how far from Paris was Urbain's house and country, besides, she did not remem-

ber ever before being in a carriage, and it seemed to her that in moving so quickly they must have gone a very long way. About an hour after midday they passed through the pretty town of Grandvilliers, where a great number of manufactories afforded work and means to the inhabitants; but they did not stop there, and the carriage, turning to the right, crossed a wide plain and diverged towards a building which could be seen at a little distance, and which was justly called the wonder of the country side. It was the Château de Sarcus, of which the elegant façade could be discerned in the distance. Blanche perceived the château, but she was far from thinking that her journey would terminate there, though she gazed at that magnificent dwelling and, as the carriage rolled nearer, she could easily distinguish the sculptures and admire the work of artists who had surpassed themselves in order to merit the approbation of that gallant monarch, who patronized the arts as much as he admired beauty.

At last they reached the front of the château, and the carriage, in place of passing, entered the confines of this handsome domain.

"Well, now, what is the matter?" said Blanche trying to open the door. "This is not the place, this cannot be right; Urbain hasn't a big house like this—the coachman is mistaken."

However, the carriage stopped in a spacious courtyard. A servant in rich livery opened the

door, and with a respectful air offered his hand to help Blanche alight.

"Oh, no, I don't wish to get down," said the innocent child, looking at the servant in astonishment, "this is not the place I was coming to; certainly they are mistaken, this is a château, it cannot be Urbain's house; besides, he would have been very prompt to meet me."

"No, madame, they are not mistaken," answered Germain, the marquis's valet, who had arrived two hours before the carriage, in order that he might give instructions to the house porter, and have rooms prepared for Blanche. "Your journey terminates here, and everything is in readiness to receive you."

"Here?" said Blanche, as she lightly stepped from the carriage, and looked around her in surprise, "but where is he?"

"He has not yet arrived, madame," said Germain, who had received strict orders to name nobody and to answer the young girl in conformity with the ideas she had formed in regard to her journey.

"What, he's not here yet? and I believe he started before me. He hasn't come here directly, then? Oh, I understand! fearing lest he be pursued, he has been obliged to hide and to make some detours."

"That's it, I am quite sure," answered the valet, smiling, "and I don't think he can get here before evening."

Germain hastened to open the windows which were all provided with vast balconies. Blanche advanced, and could not restrain an exclamation of pleasure on perceiving a lake which bathed the walls of that part of the château in which her apartments were situated. The lake extended into the middle of a wide meadow, and finally lost itself in some rocks, where the water fell in a cascade into an immense basin. On the right of the meadows one could see woods and shrubberies, and on the other side the view extended itself, far and wide, over a country dotted with hills which afforded a charming landscape.

"Oh, how charming it is," cried Blanche, "what a beautiful view!"

"Mademoiselle can hardly have an idea of what the view is when the fields are covered with verdure."

"But I should like very much to walk in all these places which I see, to run in those meadows and to go on that lake, whose waters bathe these walls and seem to me so pure."

"That is very easy, mademoiselle, for the park belonging to this château extends as far as you can see. When you wish to visit the gardens, run about the park, or boat on the lake, I will hasten to attend you."

"What! does all that I see belong to Urbain?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, all that pertains to the château."

Each word of Germain augmented Blanche's surprise. She could not conceive that her beloved could have deceived her so far. However, she had not the least suspicion of the treason of which she was the victim. The servant pulled the bell and a young country woman came into the room and awkwardly curtseyed to Blanche, who returned her salutation with good will.

"Mademoiselle, this young girl is at your orders. She will serve you as chambermaid if you are willing to accept her services."

"Oh, I can do everything for myself very well; I do not need anybody, I thank you."

"In any case, Marie will come as soon as you ring. Mademoiselle must need rest after the fatigue of the journey; we will retire."

"Yes, since he will not come until evening I will try to sleep a little. The time will seem shorter."

Germain made a sign to Marie, who after having made two other curtseys, left, followed by the marquis' valet. Left alone in her new apartment, Blanche glanced around her with surprise. All that had happened to her since the evening before seemed like a dream. She paused before the furniture, the mirrors, and murmured, sighing, —

"All this belongs to him, but why this mystery? He feared, perhaps, to be loved only for his fortune. Ah, dear Urbain, it is you only whom I love, and I should very quickly leave this fine

château if it were necessary for me to dwell in it without you. But we shall be very happy here together, although it will be rather large for us two."

Fatigued by her journey, Blanche threw herself upon the bed. Soon slumber closed her eyes, she rested tranquilly, believing that she was under Urbain's roof.

It was four o'clock when the young girl awakened. Her first care on rising from the bed was to go and look at a clock on the mantelpiece.

"Evening is still far distant," said she sighing, "and what can I do until then? It seems to me that I'm lost in this fine château. If only Marguerite were here, we could talk about Urbain, that would make the time pass quicker."

In glancing about the chamber she perceived a little door which she had not remarked before; she opened it and found herself in a dressing-room where everything was gathered that could be agreeable to a woman of fashion, but Blanche looked indifferently at a handsome dressing-case furnished with rarely beautiful objects. In her plans for a happy future she had seen only a small farm, a stable, a dovecot, and a garden, and her mind could not become accustomed to replace it by the château. She left the dressing-room and returned to the first room, where she saw a table covered with all that could tempt the appetite.

"How attentive they are," said Blanche, "really

they treat me like a queen. Urbain must have told them to take every care of me."

Blanche rang and Marie answered, but she was followed by Germain, who did not wish to lose sight of the chambermaid before the arrival of his master for fear she might inform Blanche of that which he still wished to conceal.

"Was this table laid for me?" said Blanche.

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Germain, "I thought you would need some breakfast. Excuse me if I offer you nothing but that, but not being forewarned—"

"Nothing but that! You are laughing, no doubt. There is enough here to suffice ten persons, and at M. Touquet's we never had more than two dishes for our dinner."

Blanche seated herself at the table. Germain remained at some distance, and Marie served her without opening her mouth, but curtseyed to her every time that she handed her a dish. So much ceremony fatigued the young girl, who was accustomed to a simple, frugal life. She soon left the table and evinced a desire to walk in the park. Germain immediately led her through a gallery and several passages to a staircase, at the foot of which was an entrance to the gardens. Blanche breathed more freely in the meadows than under the sculptured ceilings of the château. She left the borders of the lake, crossed a little wood and found herself presently in what was designated as

the English park, of which the paths crossed each other and formed a thousand detours, but when Blanche turned she always saw Germain in the distance, who had never lost sight of her.

"He's no doubt afraid that I shall lose myself," said she, "this is all so vast that it would be easy to lose one's way."

Blanche returned to the château; Germain led her back to her apartments, and then asked at what hour she wished to dine.

"I would much rather wait and sup with Urbain, for he will come this evening, will he not, monsieur?"

"I think so," answered the valet, bowing, and he departed, leaving her sad and thoughtful, for these words, "I think so," did not seem positive enough for her. She stationed herself on one of the balconies which looked on the lake and there, her eyes fixed on the horizon, gave herself up to her thoughts, and invoked the night which should reunite her with her lover. Soon her eyes could not distinguish distant objects, a light mist seemed to rise and obscure the scene; presently the perspective diminished, the horizon closed in; finally, she could see only a few steps before her, and Blanche left the balcony, saying, —

"Night is here, he will come."

Germain entered the room and lighted several candles.

"As soon as he arrives," said Blanche to the

man, "do not fail to tell him I am here — that I am waiting for him."

"His first care will be to seek you, mademoiselle," answered the valet smiling, and he departed, inviting Blanche to ring if she should desire anything else.

Had not Urbain's face been incessantly before the mind of the young girl, perhaps she would have experienced some fear on finding herself alone at night in a place which she hardly knew, in the middle of a room which seemed to her immense in comparison with the little room which she had occupied at the barber's, but love is the best remedy against fear, and the young girl, who would not go down into the cellar without trembling, although she had a light in her hand, would willingly go there without a candle were she sure of finding her lover. The clock struck nine.

"He cannot be much later," said Blanche, "provided nothing has stopped him on the way, for M. Touquet told me he would be here before me."

She sighed, and opening a window went on to the balcony to contemplate the reflection of the moon on the tranquil surface of the lake; she was astonished at the silence which reigned in the château, where everything seemed as still as the moonlit landscape. This profound quietude did not indicate the arrival of Urbain, and at that moment Blanche wished to hear some sound which would

at least break the solitude of the night. She tried to console herself by saying, —

"My rooms are probably distant from the entrance to the château; this house is so big I cannot hear what passes in other parts of it."

An hour rolled by, and the uneasiness, the sadness, which had taken possession of the young girl caused her to pass alternately from her room to the balcony. Sometimes she opened the door of her room and ventured into the gallery.

Joy and hope no longer animated her beautiful eyes, and she could hardly restrain her tears. At last she dropped into an immense easy chair and said in a broken voice, —

"What new misfortune could have happened to him?"

Suddenly a loud noise was heard. Blanche rose, listened, and thought she distinguished the sound of carriage wheels, the hoofs of horses, and the barking of dogs. Presently the opening and shutting of doors was heard.

"He is come," cried the young girl, and she was about to pass along the gallery to go and meet her lover, but there was no light, she did not know the way and would become lost in all these immense rooms; it would be much better to wait for him in her own. She still listened. The sound of wheels had ceased, but she occasionally heard steps and voices.

"Somebody surely has arrived," said Blanche.

"It can be nobody but Urbain; but why does he not come to me?"

She ran to the bell and pulled the cord several times. Nobody came. Greatly astonished at this, she was about to take a light and venture into the gallery when hasty steps approached.

"Here he is at last," exclaimed she, running immediately to the door, and remaining motionless with surprise and fear on seeing before her the stranger who, on the preceding night, had visited the barber's house.

The marquis paused on the doorsill. He bowed to Blanche with a look at once tender and respectful. The latter had hardly recovered from her surprise, and looked anxiously into the gallery, saying to the marquis in a touching voice,—

"Is not Urbain with you?"

Blanche's accents were so sweet, her voice expressed so much anxiety of mind, that Villebelle felt profoundly moved, and for the first time, perhaps, experienced some remorse at the pain which he was about to cause the young girl. Blanche repeated her question in a supplicating tone, and the marquis answered, turning away his eyes,—

"I came alone."

"O monsieur, in mercy tell me what has happened to him!" exclaimed Blanche, approaching the marquis and extending her arms towards him in her anxiety.

Villebelle looked at her and in that moment the

various feelings which agitated the charming child, rendered her still more seductive. Her eyes were more animated than usual, her lips, half opened, disclosed two rows of pearls, and her hair falling in disorder over her forehead, gave a new expression to her angelic face. The marquis felt his remorse vanish at the sight of so many charms. Habituated, besides, to treat virtue as a chimera and constancy as a folly, he flattered himself that he would soon be able to dissipate Blanche's grief, and now, wishing to undeceive her, he fell on his knees, saying, —

"Deign to forgive me, lovely girl; this château belongs to me. You are not in Urbain's house, but in the house of a man who adores you and will use every means to promote your happiness."

Blanche seemed as though she did not comprehend him; she looked at him affrightedly, repeating, —

"I am not at Urbain's house? But, monsieur, where is he then?"

"I'm not very uneasy about that, and I should advise him not to come here to seek you."

"But it is with Urbain that I should be, monsieur. They were mistaken in bringing me here, I said so at the time; I knew Urbain could not have such a grand house. You are going to make them take me away immediately, are you not, monsieur?"

"No, my dear child, it was I who caused you to be abducted and I will yield you to nobody."

"Abducted?" she cried, "what are you saying? Urbain had fought a duel and had to flee, that is why I started in the middle of the night."

"It was necessary to tell you that, in order that you might leave willingly."

"O my God! could that be so? But, no, it was my protector, it was M. Touquet himself, who put me in the carriage."

"Yes, adorable Blanche, it was your protector, it was the honest Touquet who aided my plans and gave you up to my love."

The frightful truth flashed into her mind, her knees failed her, the color left her cheeks, and without uttering a single cry she was about to fall upon the floor. Happily the marquis received her in his arms, he laid her on the bed and rang the bell violently. Germain immediately appeared.

"Call someone, call for help," said the marquis, greatly agitated, "she has lost consciousness. Is there not a woman here in the château?"

"Pardon me, monseigneur." Germain called Marie, and the stout country girl came running.

"Give all your care to this young girl," said the marquis to the woman, "and do not leave her for an instant. If she is long in coming to her senses, send me word."

"Very well, monseigneur," said Marie, curtseying, and Villebelle left the room with Germain.

The marquis, fatigued by his rapid journey from Paris, threw himself upon a lounge as soon as he reached his apartment, and while Germain relieved him of his travelling dress he inquired as to what Blanche had said and done since her arrival.

"Monseigneur," said Germain, "she believed that she was at the house of M. Urbain, and following your orders I have not undeceived her."

"She appears to love him more than I had believed," said Villebelle, sighing.

"'Tis but the love of a young girl, monseigneur, a fierce fire, which soon burns itself out."

"May what you say be true, but Blanche bears no resemblance to other women whom I have seen up to this day. There is about her a candor, a frankness, finally, a something, I know not what, which commands respect. I cannot explain to you the feeling with which she inspires me. Her tears sear my heart. I wish to win her love by the attentions which I shall lavish upon her. It will take some time, perhaps; but no matter, I feel capable of restraining my passion, of submitting to everything which she may exact of me. You see, Germain, that I am truly in love, for I no longer recognize self, and near Blanche I feel as timid as a child."

"We must see if that will last, monseigneur."

"Ah, you don't understand what I experience. Germain, you must start tomorrow morning for Paris; I will give you what money is necessary,

and you will bring back everything you can find of the prettiest and newest in ornaments, stuffs, and jewels. Spare nothing, that we may find something to please Blanche."

"Rely on me, monseigneur."

"How many servants are in the château?"

"The old porter, who never leaves his door, believing himself the guardian of a citadel; his daughter Marie, whom monseigneur saw just now, and who is the only woman I found at the château."

"Is she capable of waiting on Blanche?"

"Oh, yes, monseigneur, she's rather stupid, rather awkward, but very faithful and obedient. Her father answered to me for that; besides, Mademoiselle Blanche seemed to prefer to do without a chambermaid."

"Well, go on."

"The gardener, an old idiot, who knows nothing except plants. As to the country people whom we employ, they never come inside the house. Oh, I forgot, an old cook and cellarman, very drunken, so far as I can see, but he is never permitted to leave his kitchen and, in the absence of his masters, shuts himself up in the cellars."

"That is well, but it is necessary to have some people here who can watch Blanche or else she will doubtless find some way to escape, if, in time, she should form such a plan, and I brought from Paris two lackeys who will acquit themselves per-

fectly in this employment. Ah, Germain, if I can only make Blanche love me, how happy I shall be; but I am anxious to have news of her, go down and call Marie, I cannot remain in this anxiety."

Germain went down, but soon returned with the young peasant, who had already left Blanche.

"Well, how is she?"

"That young lady, monseigneur?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, she returned to her senses some time ago, monseigneur."

"And what did she say then?"

"On my word, monseigneur, lots of things that I couldn't understand — Oh, wait, I remember, she asked me if you were master of the château, and as soon as I said 'Yes,' she began to cry."

"She wept?"

"Oh, yes, monseigneur, she did nothing else, and then she asked me your name."

"What did you answer?"

"Mercy, I said that you were called monseigneur le marquis."

"She asked you no other questions?"

"No, monseigneur."

"And why did you leave her?"

"Monseigneur, it was because she told me she would like me to leave her."

The marquis signed to them to leave him. He did not wish anyone to witness the emotion which

he felt. It gave him satisfaction to know that Blanche was within his walls, but the sorrow which she showed disturbed his content. He dared not go back to her yet, deeming it wiser to allow her time to recover from the first pangs of her grief. He threw himself upon his bed, but he could not sleep. The image of Blanche was incessantly before his eyes, and with her came the remembrance of the many errors of his youth which he wished in vain to drive from his mind.

While Villebelle endeavored to account for his insomnia and agitation by attributing it to love, Blanche passed in tears that night which she had awaited with so much impatience. Convinced at last that she was in the power of the man to whom the barber had delivered her, she felt all the horror of her situation; but accustomed by Marguerite to put all her confidence in a Supreme Being, and to have no doubt of His power, she prayed and besought Heaven to reunite her with Urbain. Upon her knees, her hands raised toward Heaven, and her eyes bathed in tears, she passed part of the night, and morning found her still so occupied.

Marie came to take her orders. Blanche wished for nothing, she desired nothing but her liberty, and, in answer to that request, Marie brought her breakfast. An hour later the marquis entered the room. Blanche did not see him; she was seated with her head supported by one of her hands and appeared absorbed in sorrow.

Villebelle signed to Marie to leave them, and looked for some moments in silence at this young girl who had been, since the evening before, reduced to despair because she was pretty and had had the misfortune to please a rich and powerful man, who thought that she should be only too happy to be the object of his passion. However the change which had taken place in Blanche's features, her eyes reddened and still filled with tears, made a painful impression upon the great nobleman. He would have preferred reproaches rather than this silent grief. He drew nearer, that his victim might perceive his presence.

Blanche raised her eyes and looked at the marquis, showing only a slight uneasiness, and let her head fall again upon her hand. Villebelle had expected complaints and reproaches. Surprised at this silence he took a chair, and seated himself near Blanche, who remained silent and continued to weep.

"Are you so very unhappy then?" said the marquis at last, with emotion; and Blanche answered sobbing, but with the sweet tone which never left her,—

"Yes, monsieur."

"Can you regret the barber's gloomy house where you never had any pleasure?"

"It is not the house that I regret, monsieur."

"Here there is nothing to hinder you from being the most happy woman; all your desires

shall be laws here, you shall have the most beautiful ornaments, the richest jewelry."

"I don't wish for them, monsieur."

"You will not always think so, my dear child. Formed to please, to attract homage, one day by your features and your toilets you will eclipse the most seductive ladies of Paris."

"I don't understand you, monsieur."

"Forget the years passed in retirement and commence a new life. This dwelling shall become a place of delight; parties and pleasures shall succeed each other here without interruption as soon as your beautiful eyes repay my efforts with a smile. The barber did not deserve your friendship; the wretch would not have brought you up had it not been for his interest to do so; you may dismiss all thoughts of gratitude from your heart. As to the young man to whom he wished to marry you, he is but a boy, somebody has told me, and will soon forget you."

"Urbain forget me!" cried Blanche, starting convulsively. Then she said in a calmer tone, falling back in her chair,—

"No, monsieur, Urbain will not forget me, for I feel sure I shall love him always, and our hearts had but a single thought."

The marquis rose, greatly annoyed, and walked about the room. In a moment he said,—

"It is, however, useless, mademoiselle, to nourish a sentiment which must henceforth be hope-

less, for you shall never more see this Urbain, whom I hate without knowing."

Blanche looked supplicatingly at the marquis, approached him and threw herself on her knees, saying, in a voice broken by sobs, —

"Monsieur, what have I done to you that you should punish me like this? If, unknowingly, I have been guilty of any fault, forgive me, I beg of you, but do not separate me from Urbain."

"Rise, I beseech you," said Villebelle, who yielded in spite of himself to the emotion which he felt. "No, you are not guilty, lovely girl, it is I, I alone; yes, I am a monster to make you shed tears. Ah, why did I ever see you—but you are so pretty!"

"Monsieur, has any one the right to shut up a girl because she is pretty? If you punish me by shutting me up a prisoner in your château, that should be forbidden. Is it permitted to a great nobleman to torment poor people at his will? O my God! and the talisman which Marguerite gave me to preserve me from all danger! O poor Marguerite! if she only knew how unfortunate I am."

"Oh, well," said he, leaning towards Blanche, "since you hate me, since I am only an object of dislike to you —"

"I hate you!" said the innocent child, raising her sweet eyes to his. "Oh, no, monsieur, don't believe that; despite all the grief you have caused

me, I don't know how it is, but I feel that I should like to forgive you, I feel that I could even love you."

"You could love me, delightful girl," exclaimed the marquis, intoxicated by these words. "O heavens, she could love me and I was just about to consent — oh, never; rather would I die than lose you or yield you to another. You have given me a foretaste of so much happiness that the idea of it alone transports me. Blanche, Blanche, I shall do everything to merit the love which you allow me to hope for, but to renounce you — ah, that is henceforth impossible. I must leave you, that I may not see those tears which make me detest my love."

Villebelle left precipitantly. Blanche looked after him in surprise, understanding nothing of the transport which he had shown. She was far from conceiving that she had riveted her chains in confessing to the marquis that she had a feeling of friendship for him. Her pure heart did not know how to feign, and the feeling which she wished to give to the marquis was so different from the love she had for Urbain that she saw no harm in allowing it to appear. But Villebelle did not know how to read this ingenuous heart. He imagined that Blanche was about to respond to his love, and did not doubt but that he should, in time, cause her to forget Urbain.

The day rolled by without the marquis again

approaching Blanche. The latter tried to summon her courage, but could not persuade herself that the marquis had any intention except to keep her prisoner, and she had recourse to her talisman, hoping by means of it to abridge her sojourn in the château. In the afternoon, Blanche asked Marie the way into the park, and the stout peasant hastened to lead her to the entrance, where she left her, making a curtsey. Despite her innocent air, the country girl understood that her lord was in love with the young damsel. Marie had remarked Blanche's red eyes, and heard her deep sighs, and, while leaving her, she said to herself, —

"Zooks! if monseigneur was in love with me, that would not make me cry; far otherwise."

Although she was alone in the park, Blanche did not even conceive the idea of seeking to recover her liberty. She did not know the way, and was ignorant as to what place she was in, and how far from Paris. She felt that it would be impossible to leave without again falling into the power of the marquis, and she resigned herself to wait until he should send her to her lover. She did not suppose the marquis capable of keeping her always a prisoner, and did not yet divine all the dangers which surrounded her in the château.

Villebelle, learning that Blanche was in the park, hastened to join her there, and the young girl received him almost smiling, and although

her features still wore a plaintive expression, she chatted with him on the objects which surrounded them, and answered him with her accustomed sweetness and grace. This conduct appeared so extraordinary to the marquis that he regarded Blanche with as much astonishment as love. However, far from emboldening him, he felt for her a most profound respect, and dared not speak of his love, and, not understanding the power which the child exerted over him, he remained for some time silent and thoughtful, walking at her side.

The next day Marie carried into Blanche's room the things which Germain had brought from Paris; an infinite quantity of those charming nothings invented so that rich men may more easily spend their money. The stout peasant looked on each object with ecstasy, while Blanche hardly took the trouble to look at them.

The marquis came to see his young captive, and perceived that she had not touched his presents.

"Do you disdain that which I am so happy to offer you?" said he to Blanche.

"I don't wish for any of those things," answered she, sighing. "I do not need all of these ornaments in order to please Urbain. What would he say if he saw me in them?"

"Still thinking of Urbain? Have I not told you, mademoiselle, that you will not see him again?"

"Yes, but I don't think you're so wicked as you wish to appear. How would it help you always to vex me so?"

"Blanche, have you not confessed that you were not far from loving me?"

"Yes, and I still feel the same. With Urbain and you I should be very happy."

"May I not hope by the ardor of my attentions, my love, that I may cause you to forget a first fancy, and that I alone shall occupy your heart?"

"You don't understand me, monsieur. I love Urbain as my lover, my husband; and you — I should like — I don't know, it seems to me that I could with pleasure call you my brother — or my father."

This confession did not entirely satisfy Villebelle, but he hoped everything from time and the constancy of his attentions.

Towards evening Blanche again went into the park, and as on the previous evening the marquis joined her. He walked near her, feeling his love increase every moment. The marquis could not recognize himself. This libertine, this seducer, who had triumphed over the most rebellious beauties, had become timid and fearful before a child who had no other safeguards than her innocence and her virtue.

Twelve days had passed since Blanche had come to the Château de Sarcus, and had wrought

no change in the situation. Every morning the marquis paid her a visit, but when, yielding to the grief which she experienced on being separated from him she loved, the sweet child allowed her tears to flow, the marquis left her abruptly. In the evening they walked together in the park, but often in silence or exchanging only a few words. Blanche dreamed of Urbain, and Villebelle, satisfied in being near her, had not yet conceived guilty designs.

At the end of this time, a message from Paris apprised the marquis that his uncle was very ill, and desired to see him before he died. Villebelle, the sole heir of this relative, who was very rich, was obliged to go to him, and decided, although with regret, to leave Blanche for some days. He took Germain with him, but the men servants whom he left at the château had received their instructions; besides the sad Blanche had no idea of escaping. The marquis judged it better not to forewarn the young girl of his departure; and he left the château more in love than ever, and vowing to hasten his return.

CHAPTER IX

The Meeting. Projects of Revenge

We left our disconsolate young lover at the moment when he was about to seat himself upon a huge stone, and was arrested in the act of doing so by an exclamation uttered by an unseen man.

The words pronounced by this individual have no doubt already caused the reader to recognize our Chaudoreille, who had remained in the place where the robbers, disguised as chair porters, had left him.

Urbain was startled on hearing himself thus addressed, but being one of those persons who are insensible to fear, he calmly seated himself on the stone, saying,—

"Pardon me, monsieur, I did not see you."

Chaudoreille half rose, looked at Urbain, and began to feel reassured. Besides, what had he to fear now? His money was gone and his costume would not be likely to tempt robbers. Rolande, it is true, was still left him, for the thieves had perceived that in his hands the weapon was not dangerous.

"By jingo! you woke me up, comrade; and I was having a delightful dream. I still had the two

thousand livres of gold in my pockets, when I awakened to the sad reality. O thousand million mustaches! The thieves, the scoundrels! they have taken everything from me. I've had a fine experience; I don't own so much as an obole. O death! O fury! O despair!"

Chaudoreille again threw himself upon the ground, and pulled two or three hairs from his mustache. Feeling that this would not restore his crowns, he quieted himself, and again looked at Urbain, who was sighing deeply, and appeared to pay no attention to the despair of the despoiled man.

"What the deuce! this is a taciturn fellow," said the Gascon to himself; and then he again addressed Urbain.

"I'll wager that you have been robbed, also, comrade. This town is indeed infested with thieves and bandits; one is safe only in the midst of a patrol, and yet one can't be proud of the watch. It was that cursed theatre brought this misfortune upon me; those wretched comedians at the Hôtel de Bourgogne dared to mock at a gentleman of my race. Ah, Turlupin, my friend, I'll get even with you. Tomorrow I'll lay a complaint before the criminal magistrate, and I'll put you and Gautier-Garguille in a dungeon. But, alas, that won't restore my two hundred pistoles. I'll wager you haven't as much on you, comrade — hey? By jingo, you sigh as though they had despoiled you

of the towers of Notre-Dame. Were you robbed in a sedan chair?"

A deep sigh was Urbain's only response; then he murmured to himself, —

"Alas, I have lost her forever!"

"I was sure he'd lost his purse," said Chaudoreille, "or rather, that some one had taken it from him. Did you lose it in this neighborhood, comrade?"

Urbain looked at him in surprise, then he said, —

"I don't know where she can be. I have been running all over Paris since eight o'clock, and I have learned nothing."

"If you only had a lantern, that would help you — was it very large? If we recover it full, comrade, you must share it with me. That's understood."

Urbain rose and seized Chaudoreille by the throat, and holding him tightly to the ground, exclaimed, —

"Wretch! do you dare to insult my sorrow? If I should listen to my anger —"

"O mercy! do not listen to it, I beg of you. Ugh, I can't bear it any longer. What the devil sort of man are you? Did you come from the Château de Vincennes? Because I offer to help you look for your lost purse, you try to strangle me!"

"My purse? what, you were talking about money?"

"How could I talk about anything else after having had so much of it as I have."

"Excuse me, monsieur, I didn't understand you."

"I'm beginning to see that; but, by jingo, we were nearly choked, that is to say, you choked me. What a grip you have, it's like mine when I hold Rolande. It appears that it's not money you've lost, then?"

"O monsieur, would to heaven it were! I would give all I possess to recover her whom I adore — she who was about to become my wife!"

"Poor simpleton," said Chaudoreille to himself, "it's on account of a woman that he's lamenting thus. He doesn't know what it is to lose two hundred pistoles, without counting the small change. But since he's not been robbed, I'll try to make him useful — if I could replenish my pockets by helping him to find his lass!"

The chevalier rose, and seating himself on a stone near Urbain, said to him, in a feeling voice,—

"Tell me your troubles, young man, I'm the protector of everything in nature that suffers — in consideration of a slight gratuity; but I never charge anything, trusting to the generosity of those whom I oblige."

"What could you do for me, monsieur? I have not the least trace of the abductors, nor of the

route they have taken. Oh, I feel that courage has abandoned me."

"What a thing to say, young man! Courage should never leave you. For shame! — in all the phases of life it is courage which makes us equal the gods, who, in truth, should not fear death itself, since they are immortal. But to return to you. If you have money it is always a resource. I shall help you to find your sweetheart; two of my friends are detectives, that is to say, they operate as amateurs for the good of humanity. Tell me in what neighborhood did the little one live?"

"In the Rue des Bourdonnais, with the barber Touquet, who brought her up."

"At the barber's? Rue des Bourdonnais — and your sweetheart is named Blanche?"

"Yes, monsieur, do you know her? Oh, pray tell me."

"One moment, one moment, my young friend. Hang it! this is an event for which I — give us your hand; by jingo, you're very fortunate to have met me."

"What! can you help me to find Blanche?" and Urbain threw himself on Chaudoreille's neck.

"This young man is the one Blanche was going to marry," said the Gascon to himself, as he disengaged himself from Urbain's grasp. "It appears as though the marquis had already carried the little one off; but he has paid me, I have nothing more to hope for from him; so I must turn to the

young lover's side. However, I shall be prudent and not let him know who I am, nor what I have done in this intrigue."

Urbain pressed Chaudoreille to explain himself, and the latter answered, in a mysterious tone,—

"I am acquainted with neither Blanche nor the barber, but one of my friends goes often to Touquet's shop. I remember now that he has often spoken to me of your approaching marriage."

"That's singular! M. Touquet advised the greatest secrecy, and he himself—"

"But, you see, some one must have spoken of it, since I know it. But a man of high rank, a great nobleman, was in love with your promised wife."

"A great nobleman! what is his name?"

"I don't know yet, but I shall learn it."

"And you are sure of this?"

"Oh, very sure; and it must be this nobleman who has taken away your sweetheart."

"I entreat you to let me know his name."

"Tomorrow, that is, to say, this evening, I hope to learn it. But be prudent, young man, and do not compromise me. I expose myself to great risk in thus helping you."

"Monsieur, you may count on my gratitude."

"I will count on it, you may be sure."

"And I may expect the information this evening?"

"Yes; be near the Porte Montmartre at nine

o'clock this evening. Take care to bring along with you all the money you can get together, and I will tell you all I have learned."

"Enough! Oh, that evening were here—"

"And, while waiting for it, I shall have need of some crowns to give to the friend of whom I spoke to you, and my pockets are empty because I have been robbed so much."

"Here is all that I have upon me, monsieur; take it, I beg of you."

"Very willingly, my young friend," said Chaudoreille; "but day is dawning; we must part until this evening, at the Porte Montmartre."

"Oh, I shan't fail to be there, monsieur."

"And don't forget anything I have told you. Good-by; I'm going to work for you."

Chaudoreille departed, and Urbain, slightly restored by the hope imparted to him by this man, went to his dwelling that he might there wait for evening.

While walking alongside the Pont-Neuf, the Gascon said to himself,—

"It seems to me that the marquis did the business very quickly. The little one is abducted; this rascal of a Touquet is in connivance with the marquis, I am certain. I must be audacious now; the marquis is incapable of speaking of me; I must go to Touquet's house without appearing to know anything, and see what he will say to me; besides, from prudential motives I shall remain

in the shop, and the first angry movement that I see him make, I will spring out of the door and draw a hundred people around me."

This plan settled, Chaudoreille began by going into the first eating-house which he saw, and, for fear of being again robbed, ate and drank to the extent of all the money which Urbain had given him. It was nearly ten o'clock when he left the table. This was the time when the barber's was always the most crowded, and it was the moment which Chaudoreille chose to go there. Before he went into the shop, he ascertained that Touquet was not alone; then he presented himself, and wished him good morning with a wheedling air. The barber answered in his customary tone. Nothing in his manner indicated that he had any suspicion, and Chaudoreille was reassured. However, when they were alone he did not lose sight of the door, while asking indifferently if there was any news.

"Everything is finished," said the barber, "they are married, they are gone, and I hope I shall hear nothing further."

"Oh, they are married," said Chaudoreille, compressing his lips, "the little one has a husband. Her little lover?"

"Why, of course," answered Touquet, brusquely. "What is there surprising to you in that?"

"Me? By jingo! I'm no more surprised than a fly."

"Wait, here is what I promised you. I intend shortly to sell this house, and to retire from business. I have no further need of your visits; you have no more music lessons to give here, so you need not take the trouble to come again. Good-by, I will make you a present of all the shaves for which you owe me."

"Very much obliged, my dear friend, may I be able to prove all my gratitude to you some day."

So saying, Chaudoreille passed through the doorway, and departed from the barber's house.

"He forbids me to return to his house," said the Gascon. "That's very polite. The rascal is afraid that I shall meet the marquis there. The latter probably ordered him to share with me the gratuity he gave him on receiving the pretty little sweetheart at his hands; but patience! if you are a scoundrel, my dear Touquet, I flatter myself that I am also an adroit enough chap. I have no desire to return into your hornets' nest. Come, Chaudoreille, we must show some genius here, my friend. I must set to work to repair last night's losses and to make my fortune over again. Devil take me, though, if I ever again take a sedan chair. First I'll go to the little house in the Faubourg and learn from Marcel if it was there that the marquis led Blanche; after that I shall come back into Paris and go to our jealous Italian's house; there I shall tell her all about it,

— I shall tell her all about it! She'll go into convulsions over it. Finally, I'll keep the appointment I made with the young lover, and after having made him pay me well, I'll tell him all that I know. After that each one of them may win out of it as they best can. As for me, as soon as my pockets are full, I shall settle myself in a faro house, and I will there dare fortune in the midst of players and bankers. By jingo! what a pleasing prospect."

While laying these plans he took his way towards the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. He arrived all out of breath at the little house, and, while opening to him, Marcel asked him if by chance he had again killed a strange prince.

"Not today," said Chaudoreille, affectionately squeezing his friend's hand, which made the latter presume that his great fortune was already dissipated.

"Have you come for the purpose of buying a house in this neighborhood," said Marcel.

"There's no more question of that; I have been robbed, my friend, completely robbed. I took a sedan chair and the wretches who carried me took me into a den and put a dozen or fifteen men after me. Valor could do nothing against numbers; I think, however, that I killed three or four while defending myself. But let us drop that. Tell me, my dear Marcel, has the marquis brought here a new conquest?"

"I have seen neither monseigneur nor anybody from him."

"Marcel, you're lying."

"I'm telling you the truth. There's no one except me in the house."

"The devil! that upsets my ideas a little. You are very sure that you are not lying to me?"

"Why, hang it! if there had been anybody here I should have sent you away before this."

"Do you know if your master possesses any other little properties on the outskirts of Paris?"

"I know nothing except to follow the orders which he has given me, to eat and to sleep; for the rest I'm neither curious nor a gossip."

"You're very wrong, you'll never push yourself. Good-by, Marcel."

Chaudoreille took his way back to Paris, extremely dissatisfied that he had not discovered where Blanche was. Not wishing to go to Julia's house until he had learned more, he decided to make some inquiries at the marquis' hotel.

The brilliant Villebelle's hotel was worthy of its master, and was situated at a little distance from the Louvre. Chaudoreille slipped into an immense court and bowed low to the porter, while asking if monseigneur was in Paris.

"Monsieur le marquis is in England," said the porter, looking at Chaudoreille from the height of his grandeur, and the latter, seeing that he had no

way of entering into conversation with the proud guardian, left the hotel, saying to himself, —

"In England? Does he wish to seduce the little one with plum pudding? My faith! I've done all that I can. Come now, let's go and tell the beautiful Julia all that I know. It's not more than five o'clock, I shall have plenty of time to keep my appointment."

Chaudoreille ran to the young Italian's house, where a servant opened the door.

"Is your mistress in?" said he.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is she alone?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Go and inform her that the Chevalier Chaudoreille has something of great importance to communicate to her."

The domestic returned shortly, and immediately took Chaudoreille to her mistress. Julia was walking up and down her room, deeply agitated.

"I was waiting for you," said she to the chevalier, signing to him to be seated.

"You were waiting for me, signora?"

"Yes, for I have not seen the marquis since I spoke to you. Never yet has he been so long without coming and I do not doubt but some new intrigue is the cause of his abandonment of me."

"Alas, signora, you have divined the truth only too well.

"Then I have been betrayed," cried Julia, making a movement of fury, while Chaudoreille went to seat himself at a respectful distance, putting Rolande across his knee.

"What did you expect, signora? Men are — men. The marquis did not know how to appreciate your grace, your charms, your —"

"Hold your tongue, and tell me immediately all that you know."

"She wants me to hold my tongue and yet speak," answered Chaudoreille, rolling his eyes affrightedly.

"The name of my rival? Answer me, wretch."

"It's this way, signora — but I beg you let me tell you that by order —"

"The name of my rival, I tell you," resumed Julia, approaching Chaudoreille furiously. The little man, trembling in all his limbs, muttered, —

"Blanche, an orphan, a young girl whom the barber was caring for."

"The scoundrel! I should have known it."

"Blanche was to have been married today to a young man whom she loved and who adored her. The barber had given his consent. I don't know by what chance monsieur le marquis came to see the young girl, but he must have fallen in love with her and abducted her, for the night before last she disappeared, and I strongly suspect my friend Touquet of having aided monseigneur's plans. At all events, the little one is not at the

Faubourg Saint-Antoine; I have been there and the marquis is not in Paris, since I come from his hotel, where they told me he was in England."

Chaudoreille told all this without taking breath, fearing that Julia would do him some ill if he did not hasten his story.

"This voyage to England is a falsehood," cried Julia.

"I thought so myself."

"The marquis has taken the young girl to one of his châteaux."

"That is probable."

"But to which one? That's what we must discover."

"I'm of your opinion, that's what we must discover."

"Perhaps this young girl is still in Paris."

"That might very well be. This city is a gulf, a young girl could be lost here like a piece of six liards."

Julia reflected for some moments, and Chaudoreille remained silent, waiting till she should speak that he might echo her words. The young woman walked up and down the room; one could perceive by the trembling which had possession of her that it was only by a great effort that she restrained her fury. Finally, she stopped before Chaudoreille, and said to him, —

"You think, then, that this Blanche does not love Villebelle?"

"I think that, at least, she does not yet love him, since she had never seen him."

"How can you be certain of that?"

"In fact — you are right, I'm not certain of it at all."

"Tell me everything that you know in regard to this young girl, how long she has lived at the barber's and his motive for adopting her."

Chaudoreille told Julia the same story that he had told the marquis, and she listened to him with the greatest attention. When he had finished she fell into deep thought, and Chaudoreille dared not disturb her.

"Touquet is a scoundrel," said Julia, "I have known it for a long time, but I wish now to obtain proofs of his crime, and if, in fact, it is he who has given Blanche to the marquis, he should tremble."

"That's right, crime must be punished," and Chaudoreille added to himself, "If she would only hang him, I should not have to fear him any longer."

"Is that really all that you know?" asked Julia.

"Oh, forgive me, signora; in the ardor of my zeal I forgot to tell you that by the greatest chance, I met Blanche's lover tonight. The poor devil was seated on a stone, and I was seated on the ground; I had been despoiled by bandits, who, by the way, have robbed me of the fruits of three

years of economy and privations, which I was carrying to a savings bank. The unfortunate love to talk of their troubles; we chatted and he told me that he was searching for his future wife. I didn't wish to tell him that I strongly suspected the Marquis de Villebelle of being the abductor of his sweetheart, before seeing you; but I gave him a rendezvous for this evening at nine o'clock."

"Very good, go to this rendezvous and bring this young man to me."

"You want me to bring him to you, signora?"

"Yes, bring him to my house; we will plan together, we will unite our efforts; he that he may recover his mistress, and I that I may punish the ungrateful man who has abandoned me."

"Indeed, that's very sensible, in acting together, you will hear more and do more. I will go to the rendezvous then, and I will bring young Urbain to you. Ah, by jingo! I haven't yet taken anything today and I am afraid that I have no money about me."

"Wait, wait, take that," said Julia, "serve me faithfully and do not spare that gold."

"For fidelity I'm a veritable spaniel," said Chaudoreille, putting the purse in his belt. "I will go to an eating-house, I shall have time to eat a little and take a glass of spirits; then I will go to the Porte Montmartre and bring our lover to you immediately."

Chaudoreille hurriedly left; when he was in the

street he counted the money that was in the purse and said to himself, —

"Really, if the young lover gives me as much more I shall be in possession of a nice capital again, without counting the small change; for this Julia is a mine of gold waiting to be explored."

At nine o'clock he was in the neighborhood which he had indicated to Urbain, but he did not find the young bachelor there; which surprised him after the desire which the latter had evinced to see him again promptly. Chaudoreille walked up and down, being careful to hold his purse in his hand and to keep away from chair porters. However, ten o'clock had struck and Urbain had not come. The chevalier struck his foot impatiently, muttering,—

"Plague take all lovers! they're always half fools; this one may have misunderstood me and is perhaps waiting for me at the Porte Saint Honoré, while I am waiting for him here. If I only knew his address; this is a nuisance, by all the devils."

Poor Urbain had understood very well, and in going into his lodging at daybreak his only desire had been to see the moment of his appointment arrive. But who can foresee events. We are but sorry creatures, and yet we form great plans for the future.

Today belongs to us;
Tomorrow, to nobody.

Today, even, does not always belong to us entirely. Hardly had he reached his room when Urbain felt a shiver run through all his body; attributing this indisposition to the fatigue of the night, he got into bed, hoping that a few hours' rest would restore him to his usual health, but nature had not so ordered; a high fever ensued, and delirium took possession of the young man who, since the evening before, had entirely yielded to despair. The young neighbor who had assisted him in disguising himself, established herself at his bedside to watch; because she had a friendly feeling for Urbain, and because women are always ready to prove their friendship in pain as well as in pleasure.

This was the reason why Chaudoreille waited fruitlessly by the Porte Montmartre. Finally, at half-past ten, deeming it unwise to wait longer, he returned in a very ill-temper to the young Italian's house, who, seeing him alone, exclaimed,—

"Why did you not bring him with you?"

"By jingo! because I didn't see him."

"What do you say?"

"I say, signora, that I have vainly watched for him since nine o'clock; Urbain did not come to the place of meeting."

"How vexatious! and you haven't his address?"

"No, if I'd had it I should have gone to his house. What the deuce could have prevented his coming?"

"Perhaps he has discovered Blanche's retreat; no matter, we shall find this young man again. Chaudoreille, tomorrow at daybreak place yourself in hiding near the barber's house; watch all his movements, if he goes out follow him, and should the marquis go to see him, run and let me know. For my part, I shall go and watch the Hôtel de Villebelle; it is more than probable that the marquis will repair there shortly. By watching the movements of the marquis and the barber we shall discover where Blanche is hidden, and then I shall know what I ought to do."

"Your orders shall all be executed," said Chaudoreille, bowing to Julia as he left.

CHAPTER X

The Little Closet Again

A week had elapsed during which Julia had spent almost her whole time in loitering around the Marquis de Villebelle's hotel; she had not gained much by this however, for all that she could be sure of was that Villebelle was not there. Chaudoreille, for his part, had made no better progress; he was very sure that the marquis had not been to the barber's, and the latter kept very closely to his shop, rarely leaving home except to go to his customers' residences. What most surprised Chaudoreille was the fact that since he had watched he had not once seen young Urbain go to the barber's house nor had he encountered him in his prowling about the streets. He was ignorant of the fact of which the reader is well aware, that the young bachelor was still kept in bed by fever, and that the impatience and grief which had caused his illness had greatly retarded his convalescence.

Julia whose proud and haughty spirit could not endure the situation in which she found herself, keenly desired to wreak her vengeance on the lover who had betrayed and abandoned her, and

Villebelle being still absent, she charged Chaudoreille to take her place in the neighborhood of the hotel, and stationed herself in the Rue des Bourdonnais; Chaudoreille accepted this change with great pleasure, delighted to leave the neighborhood of the barber's house. The young woman did not intend merely to watch Touquet's dwelling, she wished to introduce herself there, to talk with Marguerite, to learn from the good old woman all the details of Blanche's disappearance. Julia was courageous and enterprising; she was Italian, and she wished to revenge herself; and thus possessed three times as much as was necessary to compass her ends.

She was not afraid of Touquet, but she readily felt that it was only in his absence that she could hope to speak to Marguerite, and she formed her plan in accordance with the information which she had received in the neighborhood, in regard to the old servant. Towards evening, Julia saw the barber leave his dwelling. As soon as he had departed, she went and knocked at the door of the house. Marguerite was disconsolate at having no news of her dear Blanche, and what completed the despair of the good old woman was that she could hear nothing of Urbain. When she uttered the name of Blanche before her master he ordered her to be silent in a severe tone, and it was only in solitude that she dared to give way without constraint to her grief.

"Who is there?" asked Marguerite, following her custom.

"Someone who brings you news of Blanche," answered Julia.

On hearing her dear child's name, Marguerite unhesitatingly opened the door; she had, besides, recognized a woman's voice, and grief had rendered her less fearful than formerly. Julia entered; she was wrapped in a black mantilla, larger than those in use among the Spaniards, and wore a cap of the same hue, from which two black feathers fell gracefully on her left shoulder. This costume, her decided step, and the animation which sparkled in her black eyes, gave to the whole person of the young Italian, a strangely fantastic distinction, but Marguerite did not notice all this, and exclaimed on seeing her,—

"Have you brought me back my dear Blanche?"

"Not yet, but I shall make every effort that you may soon see her again. In order to do this it is necessary that I should talk with you; take me to your room."

"But my master has forbidden me to receive anybody," said Marguerite, who began to regard Julia more attentively.

"Your master has gone out."

"He may come in at any moment."

"I know how to avoid him. You are very much afraid of him, are you not?"

"He's so strict."

"Come, my good Marguerite, don't let the fear you feel for the barber make you forget your dear Blanche. Upon the conversation which we shall have together, upon the information which you will give me, depends perhaps the success of my enterprise."

"Oh, to see my darling girl again, I feel that I would dare everything! Come, madame, follow me."

Marguerite went up to her room, followed by Julia, who closely scrutinized everything that she saw. While the old woman placed her lamp on the table and drew up some chairs, Julia took off her mantle; she wore beneath it a red robe, and in a black belt which surrounded her waist, she had stuck a little stiletto with an ebony handle.

This combination of red and black, which, following the old woman's chronicles, had always been the costume favored by magicians, the weapon which glittered in Julia's belt, all united to inspire Marguerite with a secret terror. She looked uneasily at the young woman and murmured, while offering her a seat, —

"May I know, madame, who you are, and where you have known my poor Blanche?"

"Who I am," answered Julia, smiling bitterly, "has no connection with the motive which brings me here. What does it matter, in fact, who I am, provided that I am willing to help you find

the one for whose loss you are grieving, and that I have the power to do so."

"The power," repeated Marguerite, who began to be afraid of a private conversation with one who frequented witches' sabbaths, "Oh, you have the power?"

"As to your dear Blanche, I do not know her, and I have never even seen her."

These words greatly increased Marguerite's terror, but Julia continued without paying any attention to it,—

"Listen to me, good woman, my personal interest leads me to seek Blanche. The one who abducted her was everything to me, I adored him, I would have sacrificed my life for him, and the ungrateful man has forgotten me. Do you understand now, the motive which has caused me to act?"

"Oh, I breathe more freely," said Marguerite, "yes, madame, I understand; this seigneur who came here is perhaps your husband. Alas! that does not astonish me, men are truly most unaccountable creatures."

"Tell me all that you know, good Marguerite."

Marguerite told her of the marquis' visit and of all that he had said.

"He had never seen her before that day?"

"Never, I can certify to that."

"And you left the marquis with the barber?"

"The marquis? was he a marquis then? Well, I had my doubts about it."

"Please answer me."

"Yes, madame, my master ordered me to go, and I left him with this marquis."

"And what followed?"

"I went to bed, madame, and I think that my dear Blanche did the same."

"That wretch Touquet was in league with the marquis. It was he who delivered up to him that young girl."

"What do you say, madame? do you think that my master? —"

"Is a scoundrel!"

"Speak lower, I beg of you; if he should come in, if he should hear you. But you are mistaken, madame, my master had consented to Blanche's marriage to Urbain."

"The better to hide his plans."

"Poor Urbain, I never see him; no doubt he is still looking for our dear little one."

"Where was Blanche's chamber?" said Julia, looking curiously around her.

"On the first floor looking on the street, madame. Since she came to this house she had occupied no other."

"It was to this house that she came, then, with her father who was murdered?"

"Yes, madame."

"Were you then in the barber's service?"

"No, madame, I didn't come here until three years after."

"Where does your master sleep?"

"Directly underneath this. This is why, if he should come in, I am afraid that he would hear us speak."

"Have you always had this room?"

"No, madame, I formerly had the one above Blanche's, and I liked it much better than this gloomy chamber, which has been unoccupied for a long time, and which I believe was formerly the dwelling of a magician named Odoard."

Julia arose and for some moments walked silently about the room. All of a sudden she exclaimed,—

"Oh, if these walls could only speak!"

"In fact," said Marguerite shaking her head, "I believe that we should learn some terrible things; a tier of tags, a sorcerer."

Julia seemed to be thinking deeply when they heard the street door shut.

"O my God! here is my master, I am lost," cried Marguerite; "he has expressly forbidden me to receive anybody."

"Keep still, he shall not know that I am here. Does he sometimes come up into your room?"

"No, but—good Saint Margaret—if he should discover—"

Julia put a finger on her mouth, as a sign for the old servant to be silent. Presently the bar-

ber was heard calling Marguerite; who was trembling so that she did not know how to stand.

"Tell him that you are going down," said Julia.

Marguerite approached the door, then, thinking she heard her master coming upstairs, —

"Here he is — he'll see you," said she to Julia.

"You must hide me."

"Wait, I had forgotten it — quick — quick — in this closet."

Marguerite ran to her alcove, passed behind the bed, opened the little door hidden by the tapestry, and Julia, as quick as lightning, entered the closet. The old servant shut the door on her, took her lamp and hastened to go downstairs. Her master was in the lower room.

"You were very slow in coming down," said the barber, looking at Marguerite.

"Monsieur, at my age one cannot move quickly."

"Has anybody been here during my absence?"

"No, monsieur, nobody."

"Urbain, perhaps?"

"I assure you I haven't seen him."

"Chaudoreille?"

"No, nor him either."

The barber asked for what he needed and then made a sign to Marguerite to retire.

"Is monsieur going to stay up late?" asked she.

"What does that matter to you?" asked Touquet looking sternly at her, "I've already told you that I hate curious people as well as gossips."

"That's true. I'm going to bed, monsieur."

The old woman regained her room, closed the door carefully, and then went to release Julia, who had remained without a light in the little closet.

"Come, madame," said she, "come, you needn't stay in there now."

"A moment," said Julia, taking the lamp from Marguerite's hand, "I should like to examine this place."

"Oh, mercy! you will find nothing curious there. We went into it once, Blanche and I—"

"There is a door here," said Julia holding the light to the wall at the back.

"A door? do you think so? We didn't see it, but then we only remained for a moment and without a light."

Julia tried to open the door which led to the staircase, but she was not successful.

"This door is closed from the other side," said she, "it must communicate with some secret passage."

"What does it matter to you, madame? Come, I beg of you."

"It matters greatly to me. Oh, if I could acquire some proof to undo him."

"Proof of what, madame?"

"It's impossible to force this door."

Julia lowered the lamp and examined the floor to see if she could discover a trap door, while Marguerite remained at the entrance to the alcove to listen if her master should come up.

"What is in this big chest?" said Julia.

"It is empty, as you see. I don't know what use it is here, I shall burn it some day."

Julia stooped and lifted the chest, the better to examine it, then she thought she saw some object on the floor. She carried her light there, and found that it was an old portfolio of brown leather, which seemed to have been hidden beneath the chest, and appeared to have been there for some years, for the dust was thick around it. Julia uttered a joyful cry and seized the portfolio.

"What is it?" said Marguerite, "what have you got there?"

"Something tells me that in this portfolio I shall find that for which I am looking."

"This portfolio? O my God! where was it, then?"

"Silence — come, let us shut this door again."

Julia left the closet, shutting the door, and when she had replaced the lamp on the table, hastened to examine the portfolio and the papers which it held. Meanwhile, Marguerite, still uneasy, remained listening near the door, but while doing so she watched Julia, whose features expressed the most lively agitation. Suddenly a cruel joy

flashed in the young Italian's eyes, and she dropped on a seat near the table, exclaiming, —

"I shall be avenged."

"But who can that portfolio belong to?" said Marguerite.

"To an unfortunate man whom your master murdered."

"Murdered! ah, madame, what are you saying?"

"Yes, everything proves it to me. This was the chamber in which he was lodged, because the secret passage would assist the murderer in the perpetration of his crime. The unfortunate man had, no doubt, visited this closet, and, without divining the misfortune which awaited him, had judged it prudent to hide under the chest his portfolio, which contains the proofs of an important secret."

"Ah, you make me shudder, madame."

Julia continued to examine the papers. Joy, surprise, hope, vengeance, were expressed in turn on her face.

"At last his fate is in my hands," exclaimed she, "perfidious man, to have betrayed me; tremble lest I inflict upon you torments more cruel than those you have made me suffer. And you, his odious accomplice, I will see that the marquis knows the monster who has assisted him in his amours."

Tremblingly Marguerite listened to Julia. The

latter put back the papers in the portfolio and carefully hid it in her bosom, then resuming her mantle she prepared to depart.

"And Blanche," said the good old woman, "you have not told me more about Blanche, madame."

"Reassure yourself," answered Julia in a solemn tone, "Blanche's condition will now be changed, you will see her again. Good-by, my good woman, keep the closest silence in regard to the portfolio; Blanche's fate depends upon it."

"Fear nothing, madame."

"I'm going down without a light; Touquet should be in his room by now."

"If you should meet him?"

"I will not make the least noise."

"But it is necessary that I should go with you to open the door."

"You need not, I can open it myself."

"There is a secret in opening it. O my God, for a mere nothing I would go with you from this house. All that you've said about my master makes me shudder, and since my dear child is no longer here I find this dwelling very gloomy."

"It's very necessary that you should remain here in order to give me, as well as Urbain, information in regard to all that the barber does. Before long, good Marguerite, you shall be happier, and reunited to your dear Blanche."

"Oh, may all that you say prove true."

"Open your door; I don't hear the least sound on the staircase; let us hasten."

The old woman groped her way down, Julia followed her; they arrived at the foot of the stairs and were about to enter the alleyway when the barber, coming brusquely from the corridor which led to the lower room, met them, bearing a light in his hand. Marguerite uttered a cry of fear; the barber quickly held the light against Julia's face.

"Well, do you recognize me?" she said to him in an imperious tone.

Touquet started with surprise, but forcing himself to restrain his anger, he answered, —

"You, at my house, madame! and what did you come to seek here?"

"Some news of Blanche."

"Of Blanche?"

"Yes, that astonishes you! you did not suppose that I knew this young girl? You believed that the Marquis de Villebelle could yield to his new passion without my knowing the object of it, without my learning that you were still the confidant of his amours."

Touquet's eyes blazed with fury as he said to Julia, —

"Jealousy has disturbed your reason, madame. If your lover has left you is it to me that you should betake yourself? Why should you suppose that the marquis is the abductor of a young girl whom he has never seen?"

"Your falsehoods are useless. I know a great deal more than you think. If you should see the marquis before I do, advise him to hasten to restore Blanche to Urbain. If by your perfidious counsels he should become guilty of— he would be the first to punish you for your crime. As for me, you will see me again; I also have a secret to reveal to you."

Thus speaking, Julia walked towards the door. The barber made a movement as if to stop her, but she turned and her hand still grasped her stiletto. Turning on Touquet a terrible look, she rapidly left his house.

CHAPTER XI

The Storm Brews

Too greatly agitated by what she had learned to retire and compose herself to rest, Julia several times during the night reperused the papers contained in the portfolio which she had found at the barber's, and she busied herself in forming new plans and meditating other projects of vengeance. The sleep she had defied did not once greet her eyelids, and dawn found her seated before a little table on which the portfolio was lying examining again a letter which she had taken from it.

At this moment, however, the bell rang thrice, and Julia hastened to lock the papers into their receptacle, and presently Chaudoreille entered her room.

"Well," was Julia's brusque greeting to the chevalier, "what have you learned?"

"Thanks to my assiduity I am at last enabled to bring you some important news," cried the little Gascon with a self-satisfied air. "For the past forty-eight hours I have not budged from before the marquis' hotel, minutely examining all who came or went."

"Well?"

"Well, indeed! The marquis has returned."

"He is here?"

"Yes, signora, at his hotel. I saw him arrive this morning in a travelling carriage."

"Very well, I shall see him, I hope."

"What orders have you to give me now? Where is it necessary for me to go? I am ready."

"You have not yet seen this young Urbain?"

"Alas, no, I'm of the opinion that the poor boy is dead from love; he was as thin as a cuckoo. I don't see what could have prevented his coming to our rendezvous."

"Return to the hotel. I tremble lest the marquis should leave without our knowing it, and in order to recover Blanche it is important that I should know the least step that Villebelle takes."

"That's very right. I'll return then to my post."

"Take this gold, but redouble your zeal; hasten; if you are tired, take a chair."

"I, take a sedan chair? I would much rather crawl all the way there. Don't disturb yourself, signora, my legs are always at my service."

Chaudoreille gone, Julia seated herself at her desk and prepared to write, but suddenly, throwing the pen far from her, she rose, exclaiming,—

"It's urgently necessary that I should see him, that I should speak to him; I will go to his hotel."

She immediately rang for her maid, and began to make her toilet. Despite the uneasiness she experienced, her mirror was often consulted, and she neglected nothing that would add to her charm. This important task accomplished, Julia sent for a sedan chair, and was carried to the marquis' dwelling. On entering the immense court of this magnificent hotel, the young Italian could hardly master her agitation.

"What does madame desire?" said the porter.

"To see the Marquis de Villebelle."

"Monseigneur returned from England only this morning, and as yet receives nobody."

"It is absolutely necessary that I should speak to him."

"That is impossible."

"Go, at least, and tell him that the Signora Julia desires to see him immediately."

The porter sent a lackey with this message, who soon returned, and said to Julia, with an impertinent air, —

"Monseigneur cannot receive you, and begs you to leave the hotel."

Julia could not swallow this affront; she looked furiously at the valet and abruptly left. Arrived at home she went to her desk and wrote the following note to the marquis, —

You refuse to see me; it depends, however, upon me to render you the most happy or most unhappy of men. I know that you are Blanche's abductor. Respect that young girl.

Hasten to listen to me; I still wish to forgive you, but at some moments I listen to nothing but my fury.

The letter written, she entrusted it to a faithful man, and awaited his return with the most lively impatience. The messenger at length came and brought an answer from the marquis. Julia seized it, and hastily read the following,—

My little Julia: your sweet note made me laugh a good deal; I find nothing more pleasing than those women who threaten us with their fury. The only vengeance which a woman in your situation can take upon a man is to deceive him, —and God knows whether you would use this means; but it is necessary, in order that the charm may work effectually, that it should be taken while he still loves you, without which it fails of its object. Your reign is past, my dear friend. You undoubtedly did not think to captivate the Marquis de Villebelle for long, and I sent you a check on my banker to settle the account. I do not know who could have told you that I had abducted a certain Blanche; once more, what does it matter to you? Am I not entitled to abduct ten women if that pleases me. Believe me, you had better not disquiet yourself about my actions or give yourself the further trouble of writing to me, for your letters will be returned to you unopened. Good-by, hot-head, I wish you a faithful lover, since you hold so much to fidelity.

Julia remained motionless, the letter was still in her hands, but she did not see it; one thought alone occupied her, the thought of vengeance, she seemed to give herself up to it with delight.

"You will have it, will you?" said she, "I will not hesitate longer."

However, the marquis was very much surprised that the young Italian should know who had abducted Blanche, and as soon as night came he wrapped himself in his cloak and went to the barber's house. Touquet himself opened to the nobleman, for the events of the night before and the fear which she had experienced seemed to have paralyzed old Marguerite, who was unable to leave her room.

"You here, monseigneur?" said the barber, with surprise, "I imagined that you were at your château, all taken up with your new love. Can it be that Blanche is already forgotten?"

"Forgotten? Why, I love her more than ever. But I was forced to come to Paris for some days, though I hope soon to return to Sarcus; each moment that I pass away from Blanche seems to me a century. However, I have not yet succeeded, and the remembrance of her Urbain — but let us come to the motive which has brought me hither. How is it that Julia knows that I have abducted Blanche? how could she have come to know this lovely child whom you kept with so much care?"

"You find me as much surprised as yourself, monseigneur. This young Italian had the audacity to introduce herself into my house yesterday evening; she presented herself, so my old housekeeper tells me, as bringing news of Blanche, but really she came to gather the details of her flight."

"She came also to my hotel; I refused to see her; she wrote to me, she threatened me. My fate is, said she, in her hands. You may imagine that I only laughed at these threats as inspired by the jealousy and spite of a woman. However, there's something very singular to me about it all."

"Wait, monseigneur, I believe I have a glimpse of light. Who informed you yourself that there was a charming young girl in my house?"

"Hang it! you recall it to my recollection. It was an original, a little man whom I found at my house in the Faubourg, hidden under a statue, and who pretended to have helped in the abduction of Julia."

"Chaudoreille?"

"It's that same."

"I should have divined it; there's no doubt of it, it was he who told Julia that you had abducted Blanche. If he should happen to know Urbain, I should not be astonished if he has told him also."

"The little clown! I paid him well enough for everything."

"After having caused the abduction, he does his best to help someone to find Blanche."

"Truly, that is not so very stupid; this is a boy who follows in your footsteps; but if you meet him, I recommend him to you. Give him a good beating."

"Be easy about that, monseigneur."

"For the rest, they may do what they please, they cannot snatch Blanche from my hands. This young girl has more power than all of them put together; one tear from her could, I feel, change all my resolutions. When I see her beautiful eyes turned towards me with a supplicating look, I am often about to sacrifice my love and to restore her to him whom she regrets, in the hope of at least obtaining her friendship."

"O monseigneur, what folly! Why, Blanche is in your power, and you are going—"

"No, no, she must belong to me; henceforth for me to separate from her is impossible. Besides, has she not told me that she is disposed to love me?"

"Come, monseigneur, pull yourself together. They will say that you yield to the threats of this little Julia."

"My uncle is very ill, perhaps he will not last through the night. I shall soon return to Sarcus, then I will not again leave Blanche, I will listen to nothing but my love."

"With women, monseigneur, that causes everything to be forgiven."

Since the barber knew that the marquis suspected where he had obtained his fortune, he believed that it was for his interest to lose sight of Blanche. If Villebelle dreamed of reëntering the path of honor, Touquet could no longer feel easy as to himself.

The marquis regained his hotel. As he had foreseen, his uncle expired during the night, leaving him immense wealth; which would lead one to think that fortune does not show her preference to those who make good use of her favors. But someone answers to that, that fortune does not make happiness; it is, therefore, necessary to console the unhappy a little.

A week sufficed the marquis to settle his affairs. At the end of that time he prepared to return to Blanche, to whom he carried presents of every kind, which were carefully packed in the travelling carriage.

Chaudoreille, who was continually on the watch about the hotel, saw these preparations for departure, and ran to tell Julia.

"Enough," said the young Italian, "I have long been prepared for this, and I have bought two good horses. You shall come with me."

"To the end of the world; I am devoted to you."

"I do not think that we shall have to go very far, we shall have nothing to do but follow the marquis' carriage."

"I understand you."

"You can ride a horse?"

"Perfectly; however, I prefer donkeys, they don't trot so fast."

"Idiot! can one hope to follow a post-chaise on an ass? Make all your preparations."

"They are made. I have my wardrobe upon me; as to my purse, yesterday evening I had some cursed ill-luck while you relieved me at the hotel. I didn't remain in the gambling-house longer than between five and ten minutes, and I had well calculated my play; well, I can say with Francis the First, I have lost everything but honor."

While Chaudoreille rattled on, Julia donned a large cloak, and took all the money which remained to her. Then she sent the Gascon to his post, while she went to get the horses. Towards seven o'clock in the evening the marquis got into his carriage with Germain and started for the Château de Sarcus, not for one moment thinking that Julia and Chaudoreille were following his carriage from afar.

Leaving the travellers to make their way we will return to poor Urbain, who, for a long time past, had languished on his bed, kept there by illness and grief. He was heartbroken at being without strength to go in search of his dear Blanche, and the good girl who gave him every care, incessantly repeated to him, —

"The more you disquiet yourself, the longer you retard your cure."

Someone had told him that a great nobleman was Blanche's abductor, and he was in despair at not having been able to keep his appointment with this man, who would have told him his rival's

name. But at last he felt better and could go out, and the first use which he made of his returning strength was to go to the barber's house. It was closed on every side, the shutters had not been taken down from the shop, although the hours of labor had long since begun; Urbain knocked, but no one opened to him.

"It is useless for you to knock," said a neighbor to him, "the house is empty and is for sale. You must inquire at the agent's, Rue des Mauvaises-Paroles."

"And the barber?"

"The barber has left it, I tell you, there's nobody there."

"And Marguerite?"

"She died a week ago."

"Marguerite is dead — is it possible?"

"Why, what is there so extraordinary in that? The poor woman wasn't young."

"Where can I find M. Touquet now?"

"I can't give you any information. That man was a bear, and he spoke to nobody."

Urbain departed, discouraged at this new event. He grieved for the good Marguerite, who had been the witness of his love and his happiness. He had no idea of any way in which he could obtain information as to Blanche's fate. He went to the Porte Montmartre and waited for three hours, in the hope that he who had given him an appointment would come there; but he waited in

vain, and then turned despairingly towards his lodging. The good-natured girl, to whom he made his lament, tried to console him by saying,—

"If it's a nobleman who has abducted your mistress, you must go and ask for her at all the great noblemen's houses."

Suddenly Urbain uttered a joyful exclamation, and a slight smile animated his pale and sorrowful features.

"There still remains one hope," he said.

"And what is that, monsieur?"

"In the midst of all these events I had forgotten that adventure, however, it may yet serve me."

"What adventure; monsieur?"

"Listen to me. You remember that in order to see Blanche I was for some time obliged to disguise myself as a woman."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, I remember very well. Didn't I help to dress you and to put in your pins?"

The girl smiled. Urbain paid no attention and continued,—

"One evening, I think it was the first time that I wore my disguise, having been accosted by several men, I escaped them by traversing many streets and it was very late when I found myself in the Grand Pré-aux-Clercs. I had almost reached my dwelling when I was stopped by four men, whom by their language I recognized as noblemen of the court. I confessed to them that I was

a man, hoping by that means to escape them, but one of them wanted me to tell him the motive for my disguise. I refused, he persisted; I got angry, he threatened; in short, one of his companions lent me his sword and we fought, I wounded my adversary, but very slightly, I think. 'My friend,' he said to me then, tendering me his hand, 'you are a brave man and I am very pleased to have made your acquaintance; if you should some day have need of a protector, come to my hotel, ask for the Marquis de Villebelle and you shall find me ready to oblige you.' Those are his exact words."

"The Marquis de Villebelle? Oh, I have sometimes heard my master speak of him. They say that he is a great nobleman, very generous, but a very wild fellow."

"No matter, he offered me his protection, and I shall have recourse to it."

"Mercy, monsieur, you will do well, and who knows whether he's not acquainted with the rascal who has stolen your darling."

"Yes, I hope that the marquis will help me to recover Blanche. These great noblemen tell each other their adventures, their good luck; such a brave man should have some pity on my torture. Why have I not already spoken to him — but his hotel?"

"Oh, he's very well known, monsieur, and it will be very easy for you to find that out."

On the morrow, as soon as it was day, Urbain went out to try and find the one on whom he placed his last hopes. He obtained information as to the marquis' hotel, and he soon arrived there.

"Monsieur le Marquis de Villebelle?" said he entering the court, and timidly addressing the porter.

"This is his hotel, but monsieur le marquis is not in Paris."

"Is not in Paris?" exclaimed Urbain, his heart contracting.

"No, he is travelling."

"Travelling? And will he soon be back?"

"He'll come back when he pleases. Do you think monseigneur needs your permission in order to go travelling?"

"That was not what I wished to say, monsieur, but I am in such haste to see monsieur le marquis, to speak to him."

"You can see him when he comes back, whenever monseigneur is willing to receive you."

The insolent porter returned to his lodge, took his glass and his fork, and resumed a copious breakfast, without paying any further attention to the young student, who remained in the court, heaving big sighs, as he said, —

"He's not in Paris; how unfortunate I am."

Ten minutes later Urbain softly approached the porter's lodge, and said to him in a supplicating tone, —

"Monsieur, can you not tell me where the marquis has gone?"

"What? Are you still there?" answered the porter without turning his head. "Can't you leave me to eat my breakfast in peace? I tell you that monseigneur is travelling. There are some people who are so stubborn; they all say the same thing, 'I wish to see monseigneur,' and they bother my head from morning till night."

Urbain would not be repulsed; he knew the customs of Paris, and took out his purse, in which he had put several crowns, and made it chink in his hand. Then the porter deigned to turn towards him, and said to him, a little more politely, —

"I'm truly sorry, but monseigneur is really absent, and between ourselves, I believe he will be so for a long time."

"O heavens!" said Urbain, "and he is my only hope. Oh, monsieur, if you know where monseigneur is, I entreat you to give me his address."

The young man held out his purse and advanced.

"Come in for a moment," said the porter opening the little door of his lodge; "yes, of course, I know where monseigneur is. It's very necessary that we should know that, in order that we may send him any important letters that may be addressed to him; but it's a secret. However,

if you'll promise to be discreet, and to let nobody know that it was I who told you, — "

"I swear to you not to do so."

"Then I'll tell you. Monsieur le marquis is at his Château de Sarcus, situated in the neighborhood of Grandvilliers. Take the road to Beauvais and — "

Urbain did not wait to hear more; he threw his purse on the porter's table, hastily left the hotel, ran to his lodging, took all the money he had left, and the same day set out to seek the marquis at his château.

CHAPTER XII

The Return to the Château

During the absence of the marquis from the Château de Sarcus the unhappy Blanche had passed some sad and monotonous days; she had grown used to seeing and talking with him, and hoped to induce him to allow her to rejoin Urbain; so the day after Villebelle's departure, astonished at not receiving his accustomed visit, she believed that he was disposed to take her back to Paris; but in the evening, not meeting him in the park as usual, Blanche, on her return to her room, asked the maid for some news of her host.

"Monseigneur has gone, he went away yesterday," answered the country girl.

"Gone without me!" exclaimed Blanche, raising to heaven her beautiful eyes, filled with tears and despair; "can it be possible that he wishes to keep me always a prisoner in this château, then?"

"Don't grieve, mademoiselle," said the good-natured girl, "monseigneur said that he would not be long absent."

Blanche made no answer, but returned to her

room, and there passed her days in grief and discouragement. She regretted the absence of the marquis, for the sweet child flattered herself that he would yet yield to her prayers. She had several times seen that her tears caused him emotion, and she still hoped that he would reunite her to Urbain; but left alone she no longer hoped, and the days rolled slowly by for the young prisoner. However, the return of springtime embellished the earth; the trees regained their foliage and the grass its verdure, the meadows were dotted with flowers, and the birds came again to the groves to sing the season of love. But, indifferent to the scenes which spread before her eyes, Blanche looked without pleasure on this charming perspective, with which at any other time she would have been delighted. The sorrow with which her heart was filled, threw a gloomy veil over all the objects which surrounded her.

Sometimes while walking in the park, Blanche considered the idea of escaping; but in what direction could she take her flight? Besides, the park was surrounded with very high walls, and the doors which led to the country were always scrupulously closed. The young girl was ignorant of the fact that in the absence of the marquis, two men servants watched her every step.

A deep melancholy seized her, the servant, Marie, tried in vain to distract her; sighs and tears were the only response which she obtained. Ten

days had passed when Marie came running one morning to tell Blanche her master had arrived.

This news seemed to reanimate the young prisoner, and she waited impatiently for the marquis to come and speak to her. Villebelle, who ardently desired to see his captive, did not tarry in coming to her, and was greatly struck by the changes which had been wrought in her whole person.

"You have forgotten me, then, in this château?" said Blanche sighing.

"I forgotten you?"

"Why did you not take me to Paris, then? Are you going to keep me here long?"

"At least, Blanche, I will not leave you again."

"Let Urbain come to us, and I will not ask you to let me go away again."

The marquis knit his brows and tried to distract Blanche by offering her several pretty trifles which he had brought from Paris; but these presents were no better received than the first, and did not even evoke a smile from the young girl. In the evening Blanche and the marquis again walked in the park. Villebelle, more in love than ever, recalled the barber's counsels and promised himself the conquest of his captive, but when he was near Blanche, he felt all his resolutions vanish. One look from the lovely child put a curb on his desire, though it penetrated to the depth of his heart, and Villebelle said to himself,—

"By what magic does this young girl inspire me with a respect that is stronger than my love?"

Blanche, rendered confiding by her innocence, was seated at the entrance of a grotto which was surrounded by thick shrubbery. The marquis placed himself beside her. For a long time he remained silent, tenderly watching her. Then he took Blanche in his arms and was about to cull a kiss from her charming mouth, when she turned her supplicating eyes towards him, saying, —

"In pity, monseigneur, let me go."

Without knowing why he did so, he allowed the lovely girl to escape from his arms. He remained alone in the grotto; Blanche, experiencing a novel fear of the marquis, had fled, and the latter, cursing his weakness, returned to the château, vowing that he would no longer tremble before a child.

Julia and her companion had arrived at Sarcus and had seen the marquis enter the château. Chaudoreille had only fallen three times on the way, but he asserted that that was because his horse had been frightened. However, he complained greatly of fatigue, to which his companion appeared insensible, as she scrutinized the château which the marquis had entered, and its high towers illuminated by the sun.

"This is where he went, then," said the young Amazon, guiding her horse close against the walls.

"Yes, signora, there's not the least doubt that he went there, since we have seen him go in,"

answered Chaudoreille, who had alighted from his horse, where he was not comfortable.

"That's the Château de Sarcus, according to what a peasant told me."

"It is, in faith, a very fine castle. My ancestors had ten or a dozen like that; but they played for one every evening at piquet, and you know that luck is not always favorable. But ugh! how tired I am, this palfrey trotted so hard."

"And within these walls Blanche is shut up."

"That's very probable. By jingo! but we came at a good pace, and at the present time I would defy the best jockey in France,"

"How shall we know on which side this young girl is?"

"I think it's first necessary to know where we can get some breakfast; you must be terribly fatigued, signora."

"I don't feel in the least tired, the hope of vengeance has doubled my strength."

"I have had nothing to double mine; I'm knocked up, exhausted, and I'm as hungry as a hunter."

Julia alighted from her horse and led the animal to Chaudoreille.

"Mount him," she said, "and take the other by the bridle. Go to the village, which you see over there, find an inn, and there wait for me. I wish to examine the château."

"Enough, I'll go and make them get breakfast

ready. Oh, under what title shall we present ourselves? I have been thinking that it would be better to preserve our incognito in this part of the country."

"Say what you like."

"I shall say that we are Moors from Spain, that we have come from Granada to give lessons in castanets. That will prevent all suspicion, and our rather dark skins will foster the supposition."

Julia did not listen further to Chaudoreille and walked towards the château, while the chevalier, not caring to remount, took both horses by their bridles and went hobbling along to the village.

Chaudoreille inquired for the best inn. There was only one in the village and he reached it, leading his two horses after him. The master of the inn came to meet him, and Chaudoreille, trying to pull himself up, said to him, —

"I am Malek-al-Chiras of Granada, professor of castanets in the two Spains, and come to France with my sister, Salamalech, to dance the bolero before Cardinal Richelieu. We shall perhaps stay for some time in this village, but we wish to preserve the strictest incognito. Do you understand?"

"I don't understand very well," said the innkeeper, looking stupidly at him.

"In that case, prepare at once an omelette with bacon, give me a room, and take care of my horses, which are Arabian."

The innkeeper understood this better, and led his guest to a chamber on the first floor, to which Chaudoreille mounted with pain, so greatly had his long ride on horseback discommoded him.

After resting for some hours he went to the table, and had been there for a long time when Julia came in search of him.

"I awaited you with impatience," said Chaudoreille, while dismembering his third pigeon.

"Well, what have you learned?"

"My faith, I've learned that we shall not have fish for dinner."

"Idiot! I was speaking to you of the marquis."

"It seems to me that as I left you at the château, you should know more than me."

"I have been all around it, but I did not see anybody. You should have asked these peasants what they know of the château."

"They look as stupid as geese. How should these people know anything? By the way, you are my sister and you are called Salamalech."

"Chaudoreille, do you think that I brought you here to listen to your foolishness? Make haste and rest yourself and we will visit the neighborhood of the château; we will see if there is any way of introducing ourselves into the park."

"Begging your pardon, it will be very difficult for me to stir today. I am nailed before this table."

Finding it would be impossible to get her companion on his feet again, Julia left the inn, after taking a little nourishment, and again went to prowl around the walls of the château.

"The devil's in that woman," said Chaudoreille to himself as he got into bed, "she would be worthy to carry Rolande at her side. My good host, put Rolande there, under my bolster. That's it, so that at the first alarm I can get him. Now see that you shut my door, and when my sister Salamalech returns tell her that I beg of her not to waken me before tomorrow at midday."

While Chaudoreille slept, Julia made the tour of the park and noticed a place where the wall was broken, and where it was possible to introduce one's self into the interior of the garden; but not wishing yet to risk it, she returned to her inn and tried to obtain some information about the inhabitants of the château. The peasants knew but one thing, and that was, that for the present, their lord was at Sarcus."

"But did not somebody bring a young girl to the château, some days ago?" asked Julia.

"When monseigneur is here the house is full of ladies and gentlemen," answered the host; who believed that the brother and sister had come to play their castanets before the marquis.

Julia decided to take a little rest, but the next day at dawn she repaired to Chaudoreille's room.

"Monsieur, your brother, is still sleeping," said

the host whom she met, "and M. Malek-Al-de Granada has forbidden that anyone should wake him before noon."

Julia, without listening to the host, went into the chevalier's room. He was sleeping soundly, and she pulled him rudely by the ear.

"Did I bring you here with me," said she, "that you might sleep?"

"Oh, by jingo! how cruel you are, I was in my first slumber."

"Come, get up!"

"Get up? get up? I respect decency too much to rise before you."

"Get up, I tell you."

"Well, since you will have it so," and Chaudoreille put his two little thin legs out of bed, saying, "It appears that I cannot make her run away."

"You will go to the château, you will enter the first court, under the pretext of admiring the architecture, and you will chat with the porter."

"And if I am recognized?"

"By whom?"

"By monseigneur."

"Do you think he amuses himself by walking in the court? He is with his young captive."

"That is presumable."

"We will meet here presently and you will tell me all that you shall have learned. For my part, I am going to find my way into the park."

After a good breakfast, Chaudoreille started, enveloping himself in a mantle or cloak which Julia had given him, and which was so much too large for him that part of it dragged on the ground; but he admired himself very much in it, and felt himself six inches taller.

As he drew near the château, his first care was to look and see if there were a sentinel upon the wall, but perceiving nothing that seemed to indicate that the castle was upon a war footing he decided to advance. On arriving before the principal gate he walked for an hour, far and wide, before knowing if he should go into the château or not. The old porter, smoking his pipe before his door, perceived this little figure, trailing a cloak, and coming and going for a long while in the same circle. Irritated by this conduct, the porter left the château and walked towards Chaudoreille, to ask him what he did there. The latter, seeing a man walk with long steps towards him, imagined that the porter suspected him and was about to arrest him. Immediately he began to run on the sward, but presently his feet became entangled in the train of his cloak and he rolled on the grass. The porter, hearing someone calling in the château, did not continue his walk, and on rising Chaudoreille saw nobody. He then hastened to take the way to the village.

"This is enough of it for today," said he, "another time I shall not be so imprudent, I'll hide

in the thickets which are within cannon shot of the castle," and he returned to his inn where, while awaiting dinner, he played at little quoits with his host, and insisted on teaching madame, his wife, to dance the bolero. Julia, hearing the noise, found Chaudoreille in the courtyard of the inn, in the midst of the fowls and manure, making many bows to a little woman of forty years, and beating time with Rolande, saying, —

"In Granada nobody dances except sword in hand. Ah, here is my sister Salamalech, she can make curtseys without touching her heels."

Julia pushed the dancing master into her room, saying to him, —

"What are you doing in that courtyard?"

"What the deuce! I did it the better to preserve our incognito, for prudence' sake."

"What have you learned this morning?"

"Many things. I believe there is a garrison at the château. I saw an armed man come out. As to little Blanche, I have a suspicion that they are keeping her in a subterranean dungeon."

"You're a fool. I've spoken to a young girl who lives at the château; I made her gossip. Blanche is in one of the towers which overlook the lake."

"Then the soldier whom I questioned must have lied to me. I had him, however, with my sword at his throat."

"Nobody has arrived at the château?"

"Oh, nobody, I'm sure of that, I have not lost sight of it."

"This evening I shall introduce myself into the park and I hope—"

"I hope that I'm not to introduce myself there."

"No, you are to watch outside."

"Ah, I'm good at watching outside; besides, I have the eyes of a cat, I can see clearly at night."

According to his custom the marquis went to visit Blanche on the day after the scene in the grotto, but she experienced a new dread at sight of him. She recalled how passionately he had folded her in his arms, and despite her innocence she felt a degree of fear as she saw him approach and seat himself at her side. The marquis knew women too well not to perceive the change in Blanche's manner. He tried to read the young girl's eyes, he wished to see again the sweet expression which so charmed him, but Blanche kept her eyes downcast, she trembled, and feared to meet those of the marquis. After a shorter visit than usual Villebelle left Blanche, and went to reflect on the means which he should employ to overcome her resistance. He awaited the evening impatiently, he flattered himself that he should be more fortunate in the gardens in making his peace with his young prisoner; but Blanche listened to a secret voice which told her she was not safe in the park with the marquis, and she did not intend to go there.

It had long been night, and vainly had Villebelle walked up and down the pathways where the young girl walked every evening. He did not meet her.

"She fears me," said he, "however, she does not hate me, she herself has told me so."

On passing before the grotto where they had sat the evening before, the marquis believed that he saw a shadow flit before him. Persuaded that it was Blanche, he ran to seize her. The person whom he pursued paused, turned, and, by the light of the moon, the marquis recognized Julia.

"You in this neighborhood, and in my park?" said Villebelle, with the greatest astonishment.

"Yes, monsieur le marquis," said Julia with a bitter smile, "does that astonish you? Monsieur de Villebelle should, however, understand all the pleasure which I experience in being near him."

"Once more, what are you doing here?"

"There was a time, monsieur le marquis, when my presence caused you no weariness, when you told me with the most tender vows that you would love me forever. Remember how often it was necessary to repeat those vows in order to make me yours."

The marquis made a gesture of impatience and exclaimed, —

"And is it to tell me this that you introduced yourself at night into my château?"

"No," said Julia, giving way to all her fury.

"Another motive led me to this place; it was the hope of vengeance. You have laughed at my love, at my grief; I will revel in your sufferings, you shall shed tears of blood when it will be too late."

"This is too much; your threats weary and make me despise you. If you have the power to fulfil them, why are you waiting for your revenge?"

"I am awaiting the presence of an indispensable witness, your worthy confidant, the barber Touquet."

Saying these words Julia glided among the trees, and disappeared before the marquis could stop her. Greatly surprised at this singular meeting, he was careful on reëntering the château to warn Germain; and ordered him to redouble his watchfulness in order that no one might gain access to Blanche.

CHAPTER XIII

The Marquis Visits Blanche at Night

The marquis returned in great agitation to his apartments. He was greatly incensed, but not at all intimidated by Julia's threats, which he attributed to spite and her jealousy. However, despite his lack of consideration for her he had cast off, there was something in the voice of the young Italian which carried conviction, and her eyes appeared to be animated by a barbaric joy when she had fixed them on those of the marquis, and warned him to beware.

Vexed at not having forced Julia to explain herself, Villebelle called his valet, and ordered him to search the park with some of his people, and if he met a woman to bring her immediately to the château. Germain, the gardener, and three men servants hastened to investigate the park and gardens, but they returned to the château without meeting anybody, and the marquis passed the night in reflecting upon the event. The presence of Julia had disturbed his peace; he feared that she would come and bring Blanche news of her lover. At daybreak he wrote to the barber and ordered him to come to the château.

Marguerite was dead; the old servant could not bear the loss of Blanche, and the fury of her master after Julia's visit. The barber, who had for a long time desired to sell his house, was about to go to a lawyer, when a letter was brought to him by a messenger from the marquis.

"He wishes that I should go to Sarcus," said Touquet to himself, after reading the note; "the marquis still has need of me. He has at times, an inclination for virtue which causes me uneasiness, but he pays generously; besides I can refuse him nothing. He has divined a part of my conduct, and if some day he should desire to ruin me as an expiation for all his own follies — for it is often in this manner that great folks repair their errors — but no, the marquis will commit follies as long as he lives; it is above all necessary that he should triumph over Blanche's virtue, for that would insure my safety."

Touquet made the preparations for his departure, and on the next day but one he arrived at the château, and presented himself to the marquis, who was awaiting him in his apartment.

"You see, monseigneur, with what haste I have obeyed your orders," said the barber, bowing.

"That is well; your presence here may be very useful to me. I feel that I need someone who will make me ashamed of my weakness. Would you believe that I am no further advanced in regard to Blanche?"

"I shouldn't believe it unless you told me so, monseigneur."

"It is certain that I should never have dreamed of it myself. She has been for three weeks at the château, and I have hardly dared to kiss her hand. Some days ago we were in the park, and I tried to advance a little further, but she supplicated me to let her go in so touching a voice, it affects me in a manner which I cannot account for, but I was nearly heartbroken at having caused her pain; since that time she has not left her room. When near me, she is fearful, embarrassed, and always in tears."

"All that will end, when you have made her yours, monseigneur."

"Have you seen her lover? This Urbain of whom she talks incessantly, and whom she calls at every moment of the day."

"No, monseigneur, and I presume that young Urbain, more reasonable than Blanche, has already forgotten that little love affair."

"The poor little thing is always thinking of him. If I could persuade her that he no longer loves her, — she would not, however, believe me. But in speaking to you of Blanche I forget the motive which induced me to send for you. You can never divine whom I met the day before yesterday, in the evening, in my park — Julia."

"Julia!" cried the barber, starting with surprise.

"Yes, she had entered these premises. But how could she have discovered that I was here?"

"I can't imagine, monseigneur."

"She had the audacity to threaten me, jealousy and rage shone in her eyes; she also spoke to me of you. I didn't understand all she was saying to me, and she disappeared when I was about to force her to explain further."

"Monseigneur, this young girl has some evil design."

"I think that, also. However, she has not reappeared since, and every evening my people make a general search in the park."

"No matter, Julia will do her utmost to take Blanche away from you."

"How do you think she will do it? You must visit the neighborhood, and if you discover Julia, tell her from me that I forbid her to present herself on these premises. If she still dares to come I can easily obtain a lettre-de-cachet, which will relieve me from her importunities."

"That will be the best thing you can do, monseigneur. Tomorrow I'll begin my researches."

"During the time which you are at the château, avoid passing through the park by the side of the lake, for you might be seen by Blanche, and I don't wish that she shall know you are here; I don't think that the sight of you would give her pleasure, and I desire to keep her from all that might add to her grief."

"I've never seen monseigneur so much in love."

"No, never has any woman inspired me with that which I feel for Blanche."

"I'm going to get some rest. Tomorrow at daybreak I shall take my way; I will search the neighborhood, I will visit the smallest cottages; Julia cannot evade my search, and as soon as I know where she is, I answer for it, monseigneur, that you will not see her again."

The barber was about to go as he said these words, but there was an expression on his face which did not escape the marquis. Villebelle ran to him and stopped him, saying in a severe tone,—

"Touquet, you have misunderstood me. Remember that I do not wish that any harm should come to Julia. That young girl is passionate, headstrong, but her love excuses it. One should always forgive the faults of which one is the first cause. I should, perhaps, have further considered her sensibility; I have treated her with too much disdain. If she will consent to become reasonable, promise her all that she shall ask. Scatter gold, that she may be happy. In addition to that, I wish to speak to her myself, that she may explain to me what she wished to tell in her letter."

"In that case, monseigneur, as soon as I have discovered her retreat, I will hasten to let you know it."

The barber bowed low to the marquis and left the apartment.

"That man is a deep scoundrel," said Villebelle, as he watched Touquet depart. "For a long time I thought he was only a schemer and a thief; why should he still be necessary to me? But I can't charge Germain to speak to Julia. Julia! I believed for a little while that I loved her. Ah, what a difference there is between that passionate, vindictive woman and the sweet and charming Blanche. Why should Julia love me so passionately, and yet I cannot kindle in the breast of that timid child a spark of the fire which consumes me?"

While the marquis was dreaming of Blanche, who, sad and solitary in her lonely room, passed her days in praying to Heaven and weeping for her lover, Julia, after her nocturnal meeting with Villebelle, sought to gain speech with the young prisoner. The watchfulness of the marquis' people did not prevent her from gliding through the park; but though she drew near the lake it was impossible to reach the tower; they had taken away all the boats for fear that one of them should serve as a means of approaching Blanche's windows. As for Chaudoreille, being ordered to watch all who entered or left the château, he hid himself in a thick bush, which was about two cannon shots from the entrance to the castle; and there, having Rolande bare at one side by way of precaution, and a bottle of wine at the other, he passed his day with a pack of cards, studying a new man-

ner of turning the king and of re-turning the aces, hiding entirely under his immense mantle at the slightest sound.

The day after his arrival at the château, the barber commenced his search. Not imagining for a moment that Julia would conceal herself at Sarcus, he visited Damerancourt, and Grandvilliers, and returned towards the evening to Sarcus. As he approached the village, he perceived in front of him a little man enveloped in a brown cloak, under which it was difficult to distinguish his body, but a long sword, whose handle protruded from one side of his cloak, betrayed who carried it.

"It's Chaudoreille," said the barber to himself, and he hastened that he might catch up with him. The little man, when he heard someone behind him, was seized with terror, and also tried to walk faster, but the unfortunate cloak entangled his legs at every step, and soon he felt himself pulled by the handle of his sword. He turned and was petrified at seeing the barber Touquet.

"Where are you going, Chevalier Chaudoreille?" said the barber, in a mocking tone.

"Where am I going? By jingo! How are you, my good friend?"

"You clown," said the barber, "I've heard some fine things about you."

"One mustn't believe all that one hears, my dear Touquet."

"And don't you think I ought to believe mon-

sieur le marquis? It was you who told him about Blanche, despite your vows."

"You know very well that between ourselves an oath is not binding, and what have you to complain of? I was the means of your obtaining a large sum of money."

"And do you serve Julia now?"

"Yes, I serve Julia. I will serve you, if you wish, I will serve anybody; I have always been very obliging."

"Where is Julia?"

"She wishes to preserve her incognito."

"Answer, wretch, no more lies."

"Ow! leave go of my ear, you are hurting me. We are lodging in this village at the inn; there is only one here. Julia passes as my sister, and I for a Moor of Granada, professor of castanets."

"What are Julia's plans?"

"The devil carry me away if I have any idea of them. She passes her days and a part of her nights in prowling about the château, like a fox watching a chicken. Between ourselves I believe she's a little cracked."

"And with what design did she bring you here?"

"Simply to keep her company. She likes my society very much, I sing villanelles to her."

"Listen to me, I ought to break your back to punish you for what you've done."

"O my dear Touquet, that was a joke."

"Get along with you, I despise you too much to strike you."

"That's very civil on your part."

"Have you told me the truth?"

"If you doubt it, come with me to the inn. Julia will not be long before she comes in."

"No, I can't go there this evening; but I forbid you to say a word to her about our meeting."

"As soon as you forbid me, it's as if you had cut out my tongue."

"If I don't find Julia tomorrow in the place you have told me of, monsieur le marquis himself will see that you are punished, and this time there will be no quarter given you."

"You may be sure I'll obey you."

"Good-by, I'm going back to the château."

"And I to the village — where I shall not await your visit," said Chaudoreille, in a low tone, gathering his cloak up under his arm that he might walk more quickly.

Touquet returned to the château and sought the marquis. It was night, and Villebelle was seated before a table as sumptuously furnished as was possible at the château; but the marquis, presuming that he should make a long sojourn there, had had his cellars replenished, and if the fare was not so delicate as in Paris, the wines were no less exquisite. The marquis appeared gayer than usual. He had already emptied several bottles, and near

him were several letters which he read while supping.

"What news?" said he, on perceiving the barber.

"My researches have not proved vain, monseigneur, Julia is at the village; she is living at the inn under an assumed name. I have seen Chaudoreille, who is now her confidant."

"Ah, the little Gascon. Have you thrashed him soundly?"

"Not yet, monseigneur, I wished first to get your orders, and I have not seen Julia."

"You have done well, I will speak to her myself. Tomorrow we will go together to the village; I shall make the heedless girl hear reason, and we shall know this grand secret which she pretends she has to tell me."

"A secret?"

"Yes, and it's necessary, she says, that you should be present when she tells it."

"Me? monseigneur."

"Tomorrow she shall be satisfied. Do you see those letters? All of those were sent to me from Paris. They are from the great ladies who regret me; there are reproaches, promises, vows, and a little of everything. Here, throw all that in the fire."

"What, monsieur le marquis, even those which are unopened?"

"Yes, of course; do they not all say the same

thing? Ah, a single smile from Blanche is worth all the sweet nothings of these ladies. Why is she not here, near me?"

"If monseigneur desires it—"

"That she may come with her eyes full of tears? No."

The marquis filled a large glass with wine, which he drank at a draught, when he exclaimed,—

"I'm commencing, however, to fear that I sigh in vain; Blanche is near me, in my château, but I dare not—but to employ violence, I cannot resort to that."

"Without employing violence, monseigneur, are there not a thousand ways? She sleeps undefended—and you have double keys to all the rooms."

"What perfidy!"

"Not greater, monseigneur, than taking her in a carriage, telling her that she was going to join Urbain."

"Be silent, you are a monster; and to listen to your horrible counsels renders me more criminal than yourself."

"It was not I, monseigneur, who counselled you to fall in love with Blanche, but since she is in your power, it seems to me that your scruples are a little tardy."

The marquis remained silent for some moments; then he resumed,—

"This morning she spoke to me less coldly; I

remained several hours with her; she seemed to me less timid. I took her hand, and she left it for a long time in mine."

"What more do you wish for, monseigneur? In secret Blanche loves you; but do you think that so timid a young girl will confess what is passing in her heart? It is not until after she has yielded that she banishes all constraint."

"Blanche loves me, say you? Ah, if it were true. But it is late; go and take some rest. Tomorrow we will go and see Julia."

Touquet bowed to the marquis, and looked stealthily and scrutinizingly at him; then he took a candle, and departed in silence. For a long while the marquis remained at the table, buried in thought, or drinking glass after glass of wine. He seemed to wish to drown in the liquor the thoughts which pursued him. Finally he rang for Germain, and said to him in a gloomy voice, —

"Who has the double keys to the château?"

"The porter should have them, monseigneur."

"Bid him come here, I wish to speak to him."

The old porter hastened to obey his master's orders.

"Are there some double keys for these apartments?" said the marquis.

"Yes, monseigneur, there are even triple keys; 'tis an ancient usage that dates from —"

"Go and get me those of the tower which looks on the lake."

The porter departed, and soon returned with a bunch of keys, saying,—

"If monseigneur wishes I will conduct him through the château,"

"Give me those and go, I do not need your assistance," said the marquis, snatching the keys from his hand.

The old man, stupefied, bowed and departed, without daring to raise his eyes on his master. The marquis dismissed his servants, saying that he had need of rest, and presently the most profound silence reigned in the château and in the grounds pertaining to it.

As for the Marquis de Villebelle, he walked irresolutely about his apartment, holding the bunch of keys in his hand, and meditating deeply. He was apparently still undecided as to what course he should take, and muttered to himself from time to time,—

"No, I cannot make use of these keys—she seemed to give me her confidence and I dare not abuse it; but must she pass her life thus? To be so near her, to have abducted her in vain. What would all the libertines say of me, all the people of fashion, if they knew of my conduct? But if they could see Blanche! Why did that cursed Touquet speak to me of these keys? I should have divined that when he entered this château, that man would advise me to commit some wicked action."

Some moments passed, and at last the marquis took up a candle, and exclaimed, —

"It is settled; I will listen only to the passion which leads me."

He left his room, which was separated from the tower where Blanche was lodged by a long gallery adorned with portraits of the marquis' ancestors. Villebelle walked slowly, pausing often to listen, and trembling for fear he should meet someone; he kept his eyes down, and seemed afraid to look at the portraits of his ancestors, who, for the most part, had honored their country by their bravery and virtue. At this moment something told him he was about to commit an act which was unworthy of the name which they had transmitted to him, and when his eyes met by chance one of those noble faces with which the gallery was hung, he seemed to read in it an expression of indignation and scorn. At last he reached the end of the gallery, and never had it seemed to him so long; he mounted a grand staircase, crossed several rooms, and entered the tower which held the young girl. A violent trembling seized him. Wishing to master his uneasiness, he hastened his walk. All the doors of communication were open, and he soon found Blanche's room. He paused, and looked at the keys which he held in his hand; he still hesitated, but, seeking to deaden himself to the crime which he was about to commit, he tried several keys,

and was soon in Blanche's room. The deepest silence reigned in this place; the marquis stepped very softly, taking each step with precaution. The door of the bedroom was not closed. Villebelle looked in, and by the light of the lamp placed on the hearth, perceived the young girl asleep.

"She sleeps," said the marquis; "she thinks herself safe in this shelter, but her breathing is oppressed; she seems as though she were going to speak; if I could but hear her."

He approached the bed. Blanche was dreaming of her lover; softly she breathed Urbain's name, and extended her arms as if imploring someone; then she murmured, —

"O dear God! they still keep us apart."

Villebelle felt moved and softened.

"No, she does not love me," said he softly; "in her sleep she is always thinking of Urbain."

He sighed profoundly, and was about to depart, when Blanche awakened, opened her eyes, and called out in terror, —

"O heavens! who is there?"

"It is I, Blanche," answered the marquis in a halting voice.

"You seigneur? so late in my room? What do you want with me?"

"Be calm, I beg of you."

"But you are trembling yourself, seigneur, what has happened?"

"Nothing, nothing; I wished to see you — to speak to you, to look at you once more."

"Ah, don't look at me so, monsieur le marquis, you frighten me."

"Frighten you? Ah, Blanche, is that the feeling with which the most faithful lover should inspire you? Yes, my love is at its height; I can no longer master it; you must make me happy; you must be mine."

The marquis already held Blanche in his arms. The young girl uttered a piercing cry, and gathering her strength, disengaged herself, jumping lightly from her bed, but Villebelle again seized her; he tried to cover her with kisses; he tried to stifle her cries. Blanche threw herself at his feet, extended her arms towards him, supplicatingly, and cried in a heart-breaking voice, —

"Mercy! mercy! if only for today."

These accents penetrated to the depths of the marquis' soul. The sight of Blanche at his feet, of her tears and of her despair, restored him to reason, but fearing that he might no longer be able to master his passion, he precipitately left the young girl, and distractedly fled to his room.

CHAPTER XIV

Urbain's Visit to the Marquis. Chaudoreille's Last Adventure

Blanche remained motionless and silent for a long time in the place where she had implored, and her loveliness and the nameless charm of her innocence had obtained, the pity, the forbearance of a man who had been about to wrong her womanhood. At last a flood of tears relieved her heart. She rose and then looked about her with terror; she listened tremblingly; at the least sound caused by the wind on the lake she shuddered, and imagined she heard the marquis returning. She passed the night in cruel anxiety.

"All is over," she said, weeping; "my hope of happiness is completely shattered. O my well-beloved Urbain, I shall see you no more; they will separate us forever, but I will die rather than cease to be worthy of thee."

The marquis had rested no better than his victim. Divided between love and remorse, regretting at times having yielded to what he called his weakness, and cursing a passion which made Blanche unhappy, he saw day break without having closed his eyes.

Astonished at having received no orders in regard to Julia, Touquet presented himself before the marquis; he remarked the dejection of the latter's features, and sought to divine the cause of it. Villebelle's gloomy and melancholy tone did not indicate that he was happy; he remained silent, and the barber dared not question him. At this moment Germain entered the room, and announced to his master that a young man had presented himself at the château, and begged the favor of speech with him.

"A young man?" said the marquis. "Is he an inhabitant of the neighborhood?"

"No, monseigneur, his dress is that of a young student; he expresses himself well, and appears to have the greatest desire to see you."

"He did not tell you his name?"

"He says that you know him without knowing his name."

"How very singular, can he be a messenger from Julia?" said Villebelle, looking at the barber.

"I don't think so, monsieur lè marquis. The description which Germain has given of the stranger is not that of Chaudoreille."

"When they introduce this young man, Touquet, step into the next room; it is possible he wishes to speak to me alone."

The barber departed and Germain returned with Urbain, who, having travelled without stopping, had arrived at Sarcus, and was waiting impatiently

at the porter's lodge for the answer which the marquis should send him."

"My master consents to see you. Follow me, monsieur, I will take you to him," said Germain to Urbain; the latter joyfully hastened to follow the valet, who introduced him to the marquis.

Urbain entered the room trembling; approaching with embarrassment the great nobleman, who was seated on a sofa, and who looked curiously at the young man, unable to resist a certain interest which Urbain's refined and distinguished face inspired.

"Deign to excuse, seigneur, the liberty which I take," said the young bachelor, bowing low to the marquis.

"Speak, monsieur, what do you want of me?"

"I come to implore your protection. You gave me permission to have recourse to it. We have already seen each other at Paris, some time ago; I was disguised, I met you at night in the Grand Pré-aux-Clercs, fought a duel —"

"What, my brave fellow, was that you, who were dressed as a girl?"

"Yes, seigneur, I had the misfortune to wound you in the arm."

"And I tell you that that was just, for I was wrong, as I usually am. Hang it! I'm delighted to see you again; give me your hand, you are a brave fellow."

The marquis rose, came towards Urbain and

cordially shook him by the hand. The latter, delighted by this welcome, did not know how to evince his gratitude.

"Seat yourself near me," said Villebelle, "and tell me what has procured me the pleasure of receiving you in my château."

"Monseigneur, you had the goodness to offer me your protection if I were unfortunate, and I come to claim it."

"You do well, my dear fellow; speak without fear. Is it money that you need, I have it at your service; don't spare it, I often enough make a bad use of it, once at least let it serve me in making somebody happy."

"Fortune could not render me happy, for it is love which causes my trouble, monseigneur."

"Oh, you are in love; that's different, I am in love, also; and at this moment it does not make me very happy, either. But come, tell me your love affairs."

"I love, I adore, a charming young girl—ah, monseigneur, there is nobody to be compared to her."

"Perhaps, but go on."

"She did not know her parents, but the man who had brought her up gave me her hand. Only one day and we should have been united, when a wretch introduced himself into the house where she lived and carried off from me the one who was about to become my wife."

"That's very singular," said the marquis, struck by Urbain's recital, "and do you know the name of this ravisher?"

"No, monsieur le marquis, but after that I learned that it was a great nobleman, a rich and powerful man — Ah, my only hope of discovering this monster lies in you, for you perhaps know the place where he lives. Monseigneur, have pity on my torture, help me to recover her whom they have stolen from me, help me to recover Blanche, and the unfortunate Urbain will owe you more than life."

At the name of Blanche the marquis rose abruptly. Urbain threw himself at his feet, seized one of his hands and looked imploringly at him; but Villebelle turned his head that the young man might not see the change which had come over his face.

"Get up, get up," said the marquis, seeking to master his emotion; "I wish to serve you, yes, but I cannot promise to restore to you the one whom you have loved."

"Among the noblemen of the court, there are men who glory in betraying innocence and snatching a young girl from her relations; seigneur, if you have the least suspicion — sometimes the slightest indication will put one on the track."

The marquis appeared to reflect deeply; Urbain, who believed that he sought to recall some circumstance which had interested him, waited with

most lively anxiety for him to speak. After a long silence Villebelle said, —

"You are very young, Urbain."

"I am nineteen years old, seigneur."

"This — Blanche is, no doubt, the first woman whom you have loved?"

"Yes, seigneur, and she will be the last."

"You are mistaken, my friend; at your age one loves ardently, but it is a flame which quickly evaporates. It is only to one like me that — bereft of the illusions of youth and wearied with change — a true love is a need of the heart and should be an insurmountable feeling. Like you, at nineteen years of age, I believed that I should love for life; I deceived myself. Believe me, you will still be happy."

"Without Blanche? That is impossible."

"You have some little fortune?"

"I have a little country house which my father left me, and twelve hundred livres income."

"With so little, distraction is not easy. I wish that you could taste some of the pleasures of your age, and in their vortex you would soon forget your first love."

"I thank you, seigneur, but I cannot accept your benefits. I repeat to you, I can never taste pleasure separated from her I love."

"Well, what I have offered you would facilitate your researches. Do not refuse me, it is only on that condition that I promise you to second

your efforts. Wait for me here, do not leave this room."

So saying, the marquis went into the room where Touquet was waiting.

"Urbain is there," said he, "the young stranger who asked to see me is Blanche's lover."

"I know it, seigneur, I recognized his voice and I listened."

"He comes to beg my help in discovering the abductor of her he loves."

"He could not better address himself."

"I almost felt ready to give him his sweetheart."

"What folly!"

"But Blanche's image is too deeply graven in my heart. However, I wish to try and indemnify poor Urbain for the evil which I have caused him; and the power of gold—"

"It is the remedy for all evils, seigneur."

"Yes, to a venial soul like yours; you have never known the sweetness of love."

"But it is necessary, seigneur, to get rid of this young man for a long time. What prevents you—by means of false advice—from sending him to England, to Turkey, to the devil even?"

"In fact, I comprehend."

"Travel will distract him from his love; you are a generous rival. Some others in your place, profiting by the occasion, would shut this young man up in some dungeon in this château."

"Oh, how horrible! to betray the confidence of this mere boy."

"In place of that you will give him money, so that he can live like a great lord."

"Could I ever pay him for the treasure I have taken from him?"

The marquis opened a desk, took sixty thousand livres in notes, which he placed in a pocket-book and returned to find Urbain. The young bachelor, as he noted the elegance of the interior of the château, said to himself,—

"It is, perhaps, in a similar abode that Blanche is lamenting at this moment."

"In thinking of what you have told me," said Villebelle, "I recall certain circumstances which might, perhaps, put you on the track of her whom you are seeking."

"O monsieur le marquis, deign to tell me."

"The Marquis de Chavagnac has often made people talk about him by abducting beautiful girls; he has suddenly left Paris, and one may presume that it was on some similar adventure."

"Ah, it is he who has stolen Blanche from me."

"Remember well that I do not affirm anything."

"And does anyone know to which of his châteaux he has gone?"

"He is not in France, and, according to what I have learned, has betaken himself to Italy."

"To Italy? Then that is where I must go."

"Take this pocketbook as a mark of my esteem, and do not spare that which it holds."

"Seigneur, I do not know if I should."

"Believe my experience; with gold one may gain the duennas, one may seduce jailers, one may surmount many obstacles."

"It will be to you, then, that I shall owe my happiness, my felicity. O seigneur, I do not know how to express my gratitude to you."

"Go, Urbain, make a tour of Italy, and perhaps you will there find happiness."

The young bachelor still wished to express to the marquis all his gratitude, but the latter would not permit him, and again wishing him a pleasant journey, he rang for Germain, who conducted Urbain to the door of the château. Hardly had the young lover quitted the marquis' apartments, when Villebelle called Touquet, and ordered him to follow Urbain at a distance, and not to lose sight of him until he was certain that the bachelor had left Sarcus. Urbain departed, penetrated with gratitude to the marquis, but while passing through the great gate, he experienced a sadness for which he could not account. He could hardly leave the château, and turned to cast a last glance at the antique towers of Sarcus. Wrapped in thought, he walked slowly down the first road which he came to, greatly touched at the welcome which he had received at the château. He hoped, thanks to the benevolence of the marquis, soon

to be in Italy, not doubting that it could be any other than the Seigneur de Chavagnac who had carried Blanche off.

Urbain had already gone some distance from the château, and was about to enter a lane which led to the village, when a shout of, "Take care there!" made him raise his head, and he saw before him a man on horseback. The rider, however, managed his horse so badly that the animal was standing across the path, having his head resting on a bush, to which he seemed to be attached.

"By jingo! won't you turn, proud animal; beware lest in place of the spur I bury Rolande's point in your side. Take care there, what the deuce! My horse is skittish, you frighten him."

The voice and accent of the chevalier immediately struck Urbain; he recognized the man who had made an appointment with him at the Porte Montmartre. Chaudoreille, after his meeting with the barber, had had no thought except to leave the neighborhood of the château, and without making his resolution known to Julia, who would, he was very certain, oppose it, he had waited till the next day, when she had left the inn; then, taking the bag which contained the effects and money of his companion, he had sold one of their horses and, under the pretext of exploring the neighborhood had started on his way, with the intention of escaping to parts unknown. But

the fugitive did not know how to hold his horse, although since his journey to Sarcus he had believed himself one of the best jockeys in France. Continually twitching the bridle of his horse for fear the animal should run away, it had taken him an hour to cover barely half a mile of road. He commenced to fear that he could not depart quickly enough by this mode of travel, when Urbain met him in the little lane, which the horse refused to leave.

Urbain, delighted at seeing the man again who had promised to tell him the name of Blanche's ravisher, uttered a joyful exclamation, and ran towards Chaudoreille. The sudden cry and approach of the young man frightened the horse, which jumped, and sent his rider six feet from him into a thick hedge.

"All the bones in my body are broken," cried Chaudoreille, while falling.

Urbain ran to help him up, and to make his excuses, but the chevalier drew away from him, and while rubbing himself looked at Urbain, who did not cease to repeat, —

"I am Blanche's lover, the young man whom you met that night, and whom you promised to meet at Porte Montmartre."

"My faith, that's true, I recognize you now; but why the deuce did you run at me, and shout so loud? This is the first time that I have been unhorsed."

"Monsieur, oblige me by keeping your promise; tell me the name of Blanche's abductor. I can now recompense you beyond your hopes."

"Hush!" said Chaudoreille, drawing Urbain towards the hedge which hid them from sight of the château; "imprudent young man, don't speak so loud."

"Why not?"

"Silence, I tell you. What! you are at Sarcus, and you don't know the name of your sweetheart's abductor?"

"No, of course not; I came to beg the Marquis de Villebelle's protection, and thanks to him I hope—"

"Oh, for once this is too much! Young man, you interest me. I am about to risk myself for you; but you have promised me a liberal recompense."

"Here, take this gold, these notes, and speak at once."

"Your sweetheart's abductor is no other than the Marquis de Villebelle."

"The marquis?"

"Why yes, by jingo! and your little girl is now at the Château de Sarcus."

"No, that is not possible; you are deceiving me. The marquis has heaped benefits upon me."

"The better to disarm your suspicions. Zounds! how young you still are. I tell you that your Blanche is at the château, and that the barber—"

"Is before you," said a stern voice, which came from the other side of the hedge, and, at the same moment, the foliage parted and Touquet appeared before the astonished Urbain; while Chaudoreille, whose legs failed him at this sudden apparition, fell again into the hedge, muttering,—

"It's the devil."

"This wretch has not told you all, Seigneur Urbain," said the barber. "Under pretext of serving you he has given you some half confidences, but I wish you should know all the obligation under which you lie to him. You were about to wed Blanche, and nothing was opposed to your marriage; the marquis had never heard of that young girl, whom I had carefully kept from his sight, foreseeing to what excesses he would be carried; but Chaudoreille, in spite of his promises, gave the marquis a most seductive portrait of your sweetheart and told him of your approaching marriage. Finally, it is to him that you owe Blanche's abduction and the loss of your happiness. Answer, clown, is not this the truth?"

"I cannot deny it," answered the chevalier, half dead with fright, "however, circumstances—"

"Wretch!" cried Urbain, "you are the cause of all my suffering, defend yourself. The first act of my vengeance shall be your death."

While travelling, Urbain carried a sword; he drew his weapon from the scabbard and advanced towards Chaudoreille, but the words, "by your

death," and the sight of the naked sword put new strength into the legs of the little man. Abandoning the cloak which impeded his flight, he ran with all his might, pursued by Urbain, who still threatened him with his sword; while the barber, mounting Chaudoreille's horse, went at full gallop to the château. The chevalier, who imagined that he felt the point of Urbain's sword pricking his back, redoubled his speed; but Urbain, animated by a desire for vengeance, had very nearly caught up to him, and was not more than twenty paces behind him when they entered the village. This flying man, pursued by another with a sword in his hand, attracted everyone's attention.

"Out of the way! out of the way!" cried Chaudoreille to the crowd, while Urbain shouted,—

"Stop that wretch."

The innkeeper who was at his door said,—

"Why, that's Monsieur Malek-Al-Chiras, castanet teacher. What can he have done with his Arabian steed?"

The fugitive entered the first door that he found open, which was one in the house of an old dowager. Chaudoreille mounted the staircase; arrived at the first floor he perceived a key in a door, he entered precipitantly, carefully taking the key with him and locking it after him. At the same instant, a voice cried,—

"Monsieur, what are you doing here? Nobody can come in, I am not visible."

It was the dowager, who was dressing at the moment when the chevalier, entered her chamber, desperate. Chaudoreille did not answer, he heard nothing but Urbain's steps.

"Monsieur, I am making my toilet."

"Make anything you please," said he at last, "I shall scarcely worry myself about it."

"Leave this room, monsieur."

"Me, leave the room? By jingo! I'll take very good care not to do that. Do you wish me to go to my death? I'm pursued by a man who absolutely wishes to fight with me."

"Well, then, fight. Can't you defend yourself?"

"I can only defend myself when I am not attacked."

"What use is your sword then, monsieur?"

"That does not matter to you. Ah, zounds! I hear him."

In fact, Urbain had discovered Chaudoreille's retreat. He knocked at the door and ordered him to open.

"Answer that there is nobody here," said Chaudoreille to the dowager, "you will save the life of the most amiable man in Europe."

The old woman answered on the contrary, —

"He is here, but he has locked himself up with me and he has taken the key."

"Oh, well, one can break in the door," said Urbain, "if this wretch refuses to open it."

Chaudoreille looked round in search of a hiding-place, but feared the dowager would betray him. Finally his glance rested on the chimney, and seeing no other means of escape, he ran and climbed into it with the agility of a squirrel. At that moment someone forced the door, and Urbain entered, followed by some of the village people. They did not see Chaudoreille, but the dowager indicated the way by which he had fled. Going down into the court they perceived the chevalier on the roof, creeping along a gutter and endeavoring to reach the neighboring house. The way was dangerous, but the fear of fighting seemed to have blinded Chaudoreille to all other perils. Already his foot touched the next roof, and, using Rolande to feel his way, he turned his head to see if Urbain was behind him; this movement made him lose his equilibrium, he slipped, then disappeared. They ran to the place where he had fallen; the descendant of Delilah had fallen on some cabbages, but not having loosened his hold of Rolande, the long sword had passed through the middle of his body. Thus perished the prudent Chaudoreille, while trying to avoid a combat.

CHAPTER XV

Julia's Story. What Was Contained in the Portfolio

The barber left Urbain in full pursuit of the luckless chevalier and putting his horse at full gallop tore back to the Château de Sarcus, in order that he might immediately apprise the marquis of that which had taken place. He arrived in short order at the château and hastened to present himself to Villebelle, whom he informed of the meeting of Urbain and Chaudoreille and the disclosures that had been made.

"Then this young man is aware that I have grossly deceived him, that I am Blanche's abductor and that she is now at the château?" said the marquis. "He is young and ingenuous, his love for this hapless child is pure and virtuous, he sought to honor her in making her his wife,—how vile and dishonorable must I appear in his eyes!"

"What does the opinion of this beardless boy matter to you, monsieur le marquis? The most important thing you have to think of is how to prevent his coming in contact with Blanche, and that, now, will be rather difficult. Now that he

is sure that she is here, he will employ a thousand stratagems to introduce himself into the château —"

"No, this boy shall not rob me of the woman whom I love."

"If he comes, as I am certain he will, to demand satisfaction, it's a sure thing that you cannot refuse to fight him, and that will be the best means of disembarrassing yourself of him. With your cool blood and your skill with the sword, you ought easily to be able to vanquish a man blinded by fury."

"Wretch! do you wish that I should be bathed in the blood of this child? No, I am already guilty enough. But what prevents me from leaving Sarcus, from carrying Blanche to a country where Urbain cannot discover her? Yes, tonight even, we will start. We will go to unknown parts. Go immediately and find Germain. The preparations for our departure must be made in the greatest secrecy, and Blanche must not know of them until the last moment; at midnight we will leave the château. By this means I hope to make all traces of Blanche lost to Urbain forever."

"That is a very good idea, monseigneur, but Julia — "

"I shall trouble myself no more about her now, besides, this step will also relieve me from her importunities. Go, run, and order everything for tonight."

Touquet hastened to execute the marquis' orders; it was already late, and there remained only a short time to Villebelle in which to make his preparations for a voyage which he presumed would be of long duration. The more he reflected, the more he approved of his plan. He imagined that Blanche would find, in travelling in strange countries, distractions which would make her soon forget the persons whom she had left in France, and he flattered himself that he would soon see the consummation of all his wishes.

Eleven o'clock struck. The night was fine; everything was in readiness for their start, some fresh and lively horses were harnessed to a travelling carriage. The marquis was still in his apartment, occupied in finishing some letters to his stewards and some intimate friends in Paris. Near him was the barber, to whom he gave his last instructions; charging him in case he should see Urbain again, to advise that young man to forget a woman whom he could never possess; and to enjoy himself with the large fortune which Villebelle had placed at his disposal.

The barber listened quietly to the marquis; his eyes were fixed on the gold and the bills of exchange spread on the desk by the side of a pair of travelling pistols. A few moments later Villebelle was about to tell Marie to go and call Blanche, when the door of the room opened softly. The marquis, surprised that anyone should dare to

come into his room so late, raised his eyes and recognized Julia, wrapped in her black mantle.

"This woman again!" exclaimed Villebelle, while Touquet turned and remained struck with astonishment on perceiving the Italian.

"Calm yourself, seigneur," said Julia, closing the door of the room, "this visit will be the last that I shall make you."

"How did you come here? What do you want? Speak, hasten to answer me unless you expect me to punish you for your strange conduct."

"I fear nothing, seigneur, it is very little matter what becomes of me after this. I find you here with your confidant, which is just what I wish. Deign to listen attentively to me. That which I am about to tell you will, I am sure, change all your resolutions, and your departure will not take place."

Julia's singular tone, and her unexpected appearance at so late an hour, inspired Villebelle with curiosity and a secret terror. He signed to the young Italian to speak. The latter seated herself between the marquis and the barber, who waited impatiently for her explanation, and after looking attentively at them for some time with a peculiar expression, she at length began her story.

"It is first necessary, monsieur le marquis, that you should know that I am the daughter of a man named César Perditor, who passed for a sorcerer in the eyes of ignorant people, and whose reputa-

tion became such that he was obliged to quit Paris to protect himself from death, or, at least, from a perpetual prison in the dungeons of the Bastile."

"César! I often heard speak of that famous sorcerer," said the marquis. "Did he not hold his conferences in a quarry near Gentilly?"

"Yes, seigneur; and there it was that an old man came to consult him, an old man whose daughter you had abducted, and whom you had wounded with your sword — the unfortunate Delmar."

"Estrelle's father?"

"Exactly, monseigneur. Old Delmar told his troubles to my father, and begged him to give him the means to revenge himself upon you; but despite all his skill César would have had difficulty in satisfying the old man if, while receiving the confidences of a great part of the noblemen and of the women of fashion, he had not learned where your little house was situated, and to what neighborhood you had taken the young Estrelle. He told it to the old man, and the latter rescued his daughter from your hands."

"What? It was her father who took her from the shelter where I had placed her?" said the marquis with surprise, and appearing at every moment more interested in Julia's tale. "And what became of her?"

"One moment, seigneur, you will learn all if you will allow me to continue. Old Delmar had

regained his daughter, but you had dishonored her, and the adventure had caused too much stir to allow them to remain in the city that you lived in. He possessed some fortune; he sold everything, realized his property, recompensed my father for the service he had rendered him, and carried Estrelle to the depths of Lorraine, and there she gave birth to her child."

"Good God! she was a mother! can it be possible that Estrelle made me a father? Ah, Julia, in mercy finish."

Julia seemed to enjoy for some moments the marquis' uneasiness, then she resumed her story.

"It was at this time that my father was obliged to escape from Paris in order to avoid arrest, and the report spread that he had perished in a dungeon of the Bastile; but he had amassed sufficient for his subsistence, and leaving his dangerous occupation, he had no thought but to live in peace. I was then in Italy, my birthplace. My father came to seek me, and brought me to France, the climate of which pleased him. Unable to return to Paris, where he would have been recognized, my father settled in the neighborhood of Nancy; there he again saw old Delmar and his sad daughter, secretly bringing up a child of whom she could only call herself the mother with blushes. Later he became acquainted with a poor farmer who had been reduced to poverty by the misconduct of his son, a wretch who, after committing a crime

in the country where he was born, had fled, carrying away from his parents all that they possessed, and leaving them in the direst poverty."

"The history of this man can have no connection with Estrelle's child," said the marquis, impatiently; "in pity, Julia, finish what you have to say to me."

"Pardon me, monsieur le marquis, that is more important than you think, and it is very interesting to your worthy confidant, who has already recognized his father in the old farmer of whom I have spoken."

The barber, who had given great attention to Julia's last words, immediately exclaimed, —

"Oh, was that my father? I was guilty towards him I confess; love of gold made me commit many faults, but I always had the intention of repairing the wrong I had done, and there is still time for it."

"No, it is too late," said Julia, casting at the barber a terrible look.

"Is he dead?"

Julia remained silent. The marquis rose abruptly, exclaiming, —

"Well, then, cruel woman, have you amused yourself sufficiently with my torture? When are you going to make an end of this?"

"You are both very impatient," said the young Italian, smiling bitterly; "but there is little more to tell you. Old Touquet asked my father

whether he had, in his travels, heard his son spoken of. My father could tell him nothing satisfactory. Soon after we went to dwell in a village near Amiens; it was there that I lived up to the age of fifteen years. Then my father died; and I came to Paris, where I went into a shop as a simple workwoman. My father had left me no property except a manuscript containing the most curious adventures of his life, and the secret history of the persons who had consulted him. This is how I learned, monsieur le marquis, of the abduction of poor Estrelle, and it was in examining these notes of my father that I saw in what manner the barber Touquet had acted toward his parents."

"Is that all that you know?" said the marquis. "Have you learned nothing more in regard to Estrelle and her child?"

"A short time ago I did not know anything further, seigneur, but chance has put me in possession of all that you would know, thanks to a visit which I paid to the barber, for it was at his house that I found the clew to the mystery."

"At my house?" said Touquet, looking at Julia in surprise.

"Yes, at your house, in the closet hidden at the back of the alcove in Marguerite's chamber."

Pale and trembling, the barber muttered,—

"You have been in that closet—but there was nothing there; no, I am very certain of it."

"You are mistaken, for in disturbing, by chance, a chest which stood on the floor, I found this portfolio, which probably had been hidden by the person whom you lodged there, who, not knowing how to dispose of these important papers, had deemed it wise to put them in this secret place during the time that he stayed at your house."

The barber looked with terror on the portfolio which Julia had drawn from beneath her cloak, while the marquis exclaimed, —

"Do these papers come from Blanche's father?"

"They come, in fact, from the person who brought that young girl to the barber's house. Seigneur, read first that one."

Julia gave a paper to Villebelle, who uttered a cry of surprise as he read, —

"Certificate of the birth of Blanche, daughter of Estrelle Delmar."

"O my God!" said the marquis, breathing with difficulty, "can it be?"

"Wait, seigneur, do you know Estrelle's writing?"

"Yes, that is it, I recognize it."

"Read this note."

The marquis took the letter and eagerly read it, —

I feel that I am about to die, but, at least, my father has forgiven me. He had forbidden me to make Blanche's existence known to her father, and, as long as he lived, I respected his orders; but he is no more, and I am about to follow him to

the tomb. Villebelle, Blanche is your daughter, the fruit of our love. Good-by. Love her more than you have loved her mother. I forgive you.

ESTRELLE DELMAR.

"O Blanche, O my daughter!" exclaimed the marquis, abandoning himself by turns to his joy and his remorse, "I am your father and I have made you unhappy."

"Finish this letter, seigneur," said Julia, "there is something there which concerns your confidant."

The marquis saw some lines added by Estrelle's hand and read,—

I have no relations; my daughter will be presented to you by a worthy friend in whom I have every confidence, and who goes to Paris under a fictitious name to try to obtain some information about a son who has dishonored him. I have confided to him the fortune which I have left Blanche; my daughter needs nothing but her father's friendship, but if he repulses her, the old Touquet will take his place.

"Touquet," cried the marquis, looking at the barber.

The latter appeared thunderstruck. He looked at the letter, a cold sweat stood out on his forehead; he could not utter a word.

"Yes," said Julia, "yes, unhappy wretch, it was your father who came to your house with Blanche, whom he was taking to the marquis; he had taken the name of Moranval, no doubt, that he might be more likely to get news of his son in Paris. Perhaps he even knew in whose house he was tak-

ing lodgings. Answer, wretch, how did you treat that traveller?"

"Do not question me," said the barber, walking wildly about the room, "I am a monster. Do not come near me; I have murdered my father!"

"And for ten years you have deprived me of my daughter," cried the marquis, starting from Touquet with horror. "You were about to make me the most guilty of men, your horrible counsels were thrusting me to a crime — wait, wretch, and receive the price of all your misdeeds."

The marquis seized one of the pistols which were on the desk and directed it towards Touquet. The shot sped, and Julia looked coldly on, as the barber fell at her feet.

"That death was too kind for you," said the marquis, "but, thanks to Heaven, I have not committed the last crime. O my dear Blanche, you are my daughter; that was the cause of the secret feeling which pled for you. I will make you happy, and you shall forget my unworthy love; henceforth, it is only a father who presses you in his arms."

The marquis left the room followed by Julia. He did not walk, he flew towards the tower inhabited by Blanche. As he approached, his voice, calling Blanche, woke the echoes. They reached the door of the room, which was locked on the inside; the marquis, who had not taken his keys, knocked and reknocked, calling Blanche and

begging her to open. Nobody answered, but presently a sound reached the marquis' ears, which seemed to be caused by the fall of some object in the waters of the lake. Villebelle experienced a sensation which he could not define; he ran and called Germain, obtained his keys and entered Blanche's apartment; it was empty, and everything announced that the young girl had not gone to bed; but one of the windows looking on the lake was open. Led by a secret presentiment, the marquis went on to the balcony. His eyes searched the lake, and he called again, —

"Blanche, my daughter."

Nobody answered, but an object showed at intervals on the surface of the lake, and seemed to move.

"It is she," cried Villebelle, and immediately jumped into the lake. It was indeed the unfortunate Blanche, who, since the scene of the preceding night, expecting at every moment some new attempt on the part of the marquis, had not tasted a moment's rest. She had not gone to bed, fearing to be surprised in her sleep, and watched trembling, believing at the slightest noise, that her abductor was about to appear. Blanche had decided to die rather than cease to be worthy of Urbain. On hearing hasty steps approaching her room, and recognizing Villebelle's voice calling her loudly, a most violent terror had seized her; and not doubting but that he had come to ac-

[illegible]

[illegible] The young [illegible] Blanche's [illegible] voice uttering his name, then a sudden sound caused him to look towards the lake and he [illegible] to the help of the unfortunate girl, with whom he had at length reached the bank; where presently he was joined by the marquis, Julia, and the people of the château, attracted by their master's shouts. Blanche was stretched on the grass, while Urbain on his knees beside her called her loudly, when the marquis came running in the greatest despair and threw himself on the ground, supplicating Heaven to give him back his daughter.

"His daughter?" cried all those around him.

"Yes," said Villebelle, gazing on Blanche's discolored features with despair, "yes, it is my daughter, my child, whom I have made unhappy, whose death I have caused. Ah, I would have given all my fortune to kiss Estrelle's daughter, to hear her call me father, and by my passions, my vices, I am deprived of my greatest treasure. Oh, my dear Blanche, return to life; before death

closes your mouth, tell me, at least, that you will forgive me. But no, I shall not have even that last consolation; she is dead without having once called me father."

The marquis threw himself on the body of his daughter, which Urbain watered with his tears; he took Blanche's hands and held them against his heart, seeking to rewarm them, to reanimate them, but all efforts were vain. Blanche could no longer hear her father's cries, nor the sobs of her lover.